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**The Colonial City and the challenge of Modernity: Urban
Hegemonies and Civic Contestations in Bombay City, 1905-1925.**

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Abstract

This thesis is a social history of Bombay city in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It explores material changes in urban life consequent upon the impact of modernity and the varied range of contestations of the colonial order which they provoke.

The first chapter outlines the specific nature of colonial modernism and shows its impact on the city's spatial forms and on its social relations. Representing a highly selective, power-driven, and essentially technological manipulation of modernity, it ensures distorted and differential outcomes within urban society. These conditions are considerably aggravated by the sudden impact of the First World War, the subject of the second chapter. The War increases material scarcities, worsens conditions of urban life, widens disparities between rich and poor, and intensifies colonial repression.

At the same time, the crisis of war brings to the city the full potential of the revolution in communications which carries a modern discourse of civic rights. In the city, Horniman and sections of the bilingual urban intelligentsia rapidly vernacularize this discourse and diffuse it into new social contexts. This is perceived by the local colonial state as seriously threatening and subversive. The third chapter shows how Gandhi's anti-modernist rejection of the city leads to his attempts to control, and in some aspects reverse, this gathering urban momentum for an expansion in citizenship rights.

The final chapter considers the new visions of urban citizenship expressed in the agitation for an expansion of civil and democratic rights, and in labour protest movements. This critical modernism looks to the future, rather than to the past, and acts as a force to humanise the city, presenting an alternative and potentially more radical challenge to the colonial state than the Gandhian movement.

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Introduction: Modernity and modernisms.

This thesis is the story of a city, Bombay, set in the modern historical era of the first quarter of the twentieth century. It explores material changes in urban life and the varied range of contestations of the colonial order which these provoke.

The concept of 'modernity' tends to be accompanied by a confusing conflict of definitions which often elicit strong reactions. However, I do believe that it is a useful concept to convey the broad range of issues with which this thesis is concerned. Consistent with much of the historical literature¹ on the subject, I view modernity essentially as urban experience.² It can be defined as a periodised experience of urban industrial life, materially structured in the early twentieth century by the technologies and artifacts of the 'second industrial revolution' of the late nineteenth century, and receptive to a variety of related social ideas.

This emphasis on the experience of city life at a particular historical conjuncture also places modernity as a local, periodised phase within the larger global process of 'modernisation' which has been occurring over a *longue duree* of centuries and affecting entire social formations (rather than just cities) in a variety of reciprocal ways.³ Indeed, Bombay's reception of modernity was shaped not only by its pivotal role in the colonial market-place, but more particularly by the contradictions unleashed by imperial urban processes resulting in very different constructions of the new forces by contending social classes.

Between 1905 and 1925, Bombay witnessed the arrival of the cinema and the motor car, as well as of an unprecedented range of consumer goods, its streets were built with new methods of construction, and its buildings with new materials such as

¹As distinct from the "sociological" interpretation of modernity. For a recent critique of the flawed sociology of modernity, see David Washbrook, *From Comparative Sociology to Global History: Britain and India in the Pre-History of Modernity*, in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 40, 4 (1997), pp. 410-443.

²For instance, Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air. The Experience of Modernity*. (London 1983); Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (London 1989); Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (eds), *Modern Times* (London 1996).

³See Washbrook, *From Comparative Sociology..*, pp. 417-424.

reinforced cement concrete. The city became increasingly electrified, daily newspapers expanded, and rush hours emerged. At the same time, ideas of citizenship, town planning, trade unions, and socialism erupted into the intellectual life of the city, causing a new effervescence. The event of war, now industrialised to unparalleled levels of destructiveness, also impacted on the city, bringing evidence of a darker side of modernity. But the First World War also dramatically intensified the contradictions of colonial rule: while reinforcing official dispositions towards a coercive use of modern 'technics', it also exacerbated social inequalities; both these movements now provoked intensified forms of protest and contestation.

The first part of the thesis shows how the new forces of modernity impacted on the city's spatial forms and on its social relations. They inscribed themselves on a city that had already been shaped by a distinctive colonial conceptualization of urban space, marked by an extreme degree of social differentiation. This "colonial urbanism" originally derived from the city's projected vocation, in the eyes of its imperial rulers, as a commercial centre for the concentration and, on the one hand, export of commodities extracted from a rural hinterland, and on the other, import of consumer goods from Britain. It required the creation of capitalist social relationships through a legal framework which emphasized private property and trading rights within a politically authoritarian regime.

The resulting accumulation of wealth gave the city its dominant class factions of merchants, landlords, and industrialists, exploiting a large labouring class servicing their needs. Colonial spatial organisation thus shaped the hegemony of some groups over the mass of citizens; it produced a series of formally differentiated social spaces inhabited by communities characterized by extreme class inequalities both in material well-being and in access to various kinds of urban resources. Contemporaries observed the stark contrast between the few localities rich in civic amenities, and the majority of neighbourhoods lacking adequate housing, transport, and water-supply, and prone to the scourge of disease. Yet, it was precisely the severity of this social inequality that made Bombay particularly receptive to some of the new visions of modernity.

Thus, however much Bombay owed its origins to colonial enterprises and continued, during this period, to serve imperial needs, the city's ability to attract and integrate some of the new ideas and artifacts into its life, does in my view give it a significant measure of agency. Between 1905 and 1925, the city ordered new rotary printing presses, film cameras, as well as contemporary radical political books, journals, and pamphlets. It debated ideas of citizenship and town planning, the rise of socialism, women's right to the franchise, the role of trade unions, and the importance of architecture. And it produced protest movements that provided a novel challenge to the existing colonial order, movements, moreover that had an all-India impact. If this seems an arbitrary selection from the range of the city's engagements with modernity, it nonetheless serves to illustrate a point.

That is that, while there clearly is a relationship between colonial hegemony and the experience of modernity, in no sense are they identical processes. From the vast array of raw materials that make it up, modernity offers a range of possible world-views or "modernisms" which contending social groups in the city construct differently.

Colonial modernism represented a highly selective, power-driven manipulation of modernity. It placed a premium on a largely mechanical and superficial technological interpretation, the 'social filters' of domination and privilege ensuring limited applications to, and distorted and differential outcomes within, urban society.⁴ Architecturally imposing buildings, new wide roads and electric lighting simply served to consolidate particular localities of south Bombay as elite social spaces, distinguished from the rest of a city starved of civic amenities. The reinforced concrete tenement chawl intensified the bleakness of working-class housing. The electrified tramway

⁴Richard W. Bulliet uses the concept of 'social filters' to define hegemonic processes such as class, race, colonialism, gender which, he argues, determines which technologies are disseminated between societies and how rapidly they impact. Richard W. Bulliet, *Determinism and Pre-Industrial Technology*, in Merrit Roe Smith and Leo Marx (eds), *Does Technology Drive History?* (Cambridge Mass. 1994), p. 205.

banned *halalkores* (sweepers) from using the service, while taxis were forbidden by the police from carrying cleaners and other menials belonging to the 'Depressed Classes'.⁵

New wireless stations were set up primarily 'with a view to suppress civil disorder',⁶ while the cinema was perceived as a potential vehicle for government propaganda. Similarly, the perspectives opened up by ideas of urban planning were nullified by the local colonial state's involvement in the competition, amongst the dominant class factions, for the scarce market resource of urban land. Visually reinforcing spatial inequality and social stratification, and inseparable from the exercise of hegemony, colonial modernism could thus only provoke challenge and contestation.

In the early post-war era in Bombay city, colonial modernism was confronted by the Gandhian movement. Along with the colonial model, Gandhi rejected all potential varieties of modernism as alien to the genius of "Indian civilization". However, his distinctive "invention of tradition" necessarily occurred within the actual framework of the present, the past serving essentially as an ideological instrument to confront the unsettling 'maelstrom of modern life'.⁷ In particular, his rejection of the city as the principal artifact of modernity led to unsustainable attempts to deny urban materialities and to reverse citizens' evolving modes of consumption. This restricted his appeal to a well-to-do but unsettled urban merchant class whose tax grievances against the colonial regime now drew them into nationalist politics. Gandhian contradictions were encapsulated by the Municipal Nationalist Party's ambivalent opposition to the colonial *status quo* in the city in the mid-1920s.

In contrast to Gandhi's anti-modernism, this thesis has sought to identify a "critical modernism" which came to prominence virtually simultaneously in the early post-war era. It attempts to show how, in reaction to colonial urbanization and political

⁵The *Bombay Chronicle* received a letter of complaint from a tram passenger who had witnessed the ejection of a *halalkore* by the conductor. The author wondered how the Tramway Company 'conducted ostensibly by men of most advanced views' were able to prohibit a certain class of people from travelling in its cars, a policy which was wholly 'incompatible with the spirit of modern times'. *BC*, 7 Aug. 1922.

⁶*GOI Home Political Proceedings*, Jan. 1922.

⁷Berman, *All That Is Solid..*, p. 16.

repression, Bombay citizens developed increasing civic aspirations which culminated in a series of campaigns and protest movements in the city. This expanded consciousness of rights was not an automatic by-product of industrial modernity or of “nationalism”, but the outcome of an impressive creativity in understanding the relevance of, and seizing upon, a contestatory vocabulary of civic democracy derived from a Western world itself in the throes of unprecedented social change.⁸ This enabled a novel linguistic ordering, and new definitions, of urban experience.⁹

It is significant that this movement emerged from the simultaneous realms of journalistic practice and labour/political activism during the crisis years of war. In an era of global transformations marked by a revolutionary circulation of new ideas, the newspaper provided an expanding public space for the production, dissemination, and public discussion of ideas: here, the material grievances of the poorer sections of urban society could for the first time be linked to the more general colonial denial of civic rights, particularly the rights of expression and of political participation, the hallmarks of contemporary nationalist agitation. In this building up of connections, the leadership roles of the *Bombay Chronicle* and of its activist editor, Benjamin Guy Horniman, were crucial. The paper constructed a daily narrative of the city which identified the undesirable hegemonies of the urban colonial order and kept them constantly in the public eye.

The *Bombay Chronicle* revealed an autocratic and unaccountable local colonial state both presiding over and sharing in, the unfettered domination of private interests over the city. In the daily scenario drawn in its pages, “public” institutions--government

⁸I therefore understand critical modernism as a dynamic and dialectical urban process, entirely differently to Bhikhu Parekh's use of the term. Parekh defines 'critical modernism' purely in terms of nineteenth century attempts by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, K. C Sen, and Gokhale to achieve a 'syncretism' or 'creative synthesis' between the 'spiritual principles' of Hindu civilization and the modern European 'spirit of science'. Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform* (Delhi 1989), pp. 59-63.

⁹On the political importance of the appropriate linguistic 'ordering' of material experience, see Gareth Stedman Jones's essay *Rethinking Chartism*, in his *Languages of Class: Studies in English working class history* (Cambridge 1983), pp. 90-178; and also, François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge 1981).

departments, the Improvement Trust, the Municipal Corporation--were essentially engaged in activities detrimental to both the city and to the vast majority of its citizens. Their operations facilitated the exploitation of citizens by unregulated private enterprise, ensuring high levels of social deprivation: tenants by landlords, workers by millowners and their middlemen, consumers by merchants and monopolies, passengers by the railway companies. The *Chronicle* provided an increasingly influential reading of the various civic contestations that were now challenging these hegemonies, thus cohering and amplifying them.

This narrative was, of course, in English, the original language of modernity. However, its dissonant and contestatory use as a means of assaulting mainstream colonial culture revealed English in a new light: no longer the one-dimensional repository of a timeless 'great tradition' emphasized and promoted by Macauley, and used, in the city's higher education institutions, to transmit a politically conservative 'cultural ideal';¹⁰ but a changeable and flexible medium that could be shaped and reshaped for new purposes. Originally disseminated as the language of power, the thrust of critical modernism was now remaking and revitalising English, and taking it into new domains of use; in spite of Gandhi's view that 'the highest development of the Indian mind' did not require "a knowledge of English',¹¹ mastery of this dissident English was the perfect symmetrical response to the original colonial conquest of Indian 'epistemological space' through the appropriation and objectification of Indian languages.¹² This could now mean that a translated article from the *Chronicle* would lead groups amongst the urban poor such as postmen to strike, while government

¹⁰English education was formally organised through the setting up of the Elphinstone College (1827) and the University of Bombay (1857); it was not only designed to create a class of 'interpreters', to be employed mainly in the various government departments, but to inculcate a code of moral values which emphasized 'self-improvement' and strength of character, the quintessential virtues of Victorian capitalism. Ellen E. McDonald, *English Education and Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Bombay: A Case Study in the Transmission of a Cultural Ideal*, in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25, 3 (May 1966), pp. 453-470.

¹¹YI, 2 Feb. 1921. This view also denied the very basis of his own cultural creativity.

¹²Bernard S. Cohn, *The Command of Language and the Language of Command*, in R. Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies IV* (Delhi 1986), pp. 276-329.

pamphlets in the vernacular designed to explain the Rowlatt Act would have no effect whatsoever.

This divergent English was received by a bilingual intelligentsia¹³ long accustomed, in the city, to mediating between English and the main Marathi and Gujarati vernaculars.¹⁴ Given the bilingual character of a substantial section of the urban press, these mediations largely shaped the evolution of public opinion. The English of critical modernism now provided opportunities for its vernacularization into expanded civic contexts. A Bombay characterized by an unprecedented circulation of print--newspapers, magazines, Home Rule pamphlets, Satyagraha leaflets, cinema and theatre posters, advertisements, notices for public meetings, Khilafat handbills, trade union bulletins, municipal petitions, banners carried by striking workers and nationalist demonstrators--offered a vast array of possibilities for vernacularization. Indeed, much of this writing was itself bilingual.¹⁵ Moreover, the circulation and discussion of the new civic articulations were boosted by the fact that they operated within an expanding and increasingly assertive meta-nationalist public discourse.

Besides the press, political activism provided a more direct oral dissemination route. The very social structure of the city, characterized by extreme class and literacy inequalities, ensured that sections of the bilingual intelligentsia played a crucial role in attempting to organise the working classes during this era. Labour activists and early trade union organisers were predominantly drawn from groups whose professions

¹³This concept is borrowed from Benedict Anderson though I perceive this intelligentsia's role in somewhat more creative terms at this *particular* historical conjuncture. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1991), pp. 116, 134, 140.

The Bombay intelligentsia's general exclusion from the municipal franchise until 1923 meant that it tended to adopt a critical perspective vis-a-vis the colonial urban order. Journalists, moreover, tended to be its most vociferous anti-establishment faction. During this period, these bilinguals were in the process of emerging as a nationalist intelligentsia, but more interestingly perhaps, with a variety of nuanced positions along the modernist-anti-modernist continuum.

¹⁴ Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India* (Oxford 1972), pp. 54-55.

¹⁵And sometimes indeed trilingual. The monthly *Movie* magazine, for instance, launched in 1924, was published in English, Marathi, and Gujarati. Annual Report on Indian and Anglo-Vernacular Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1924; *Bombay Confidential Proceedings* 1925, pp. 108-9.

demanding the constant handling and switching of language: social workers, journalists, barristers and advocates. For these strategically-placed readers, bilinguality offered the ability to access the modernist world of changing visions and practices and to select and diffuse the most relevant concepts and ideas in the context of an evolving urban labour arena.

Throughout this era, literacy in English was rising faster than the general rate of literacy in the city. Between the early years of the century and the late 1920s, the percentage of the literate population rose from 19 to 24 percent;¹⁶ over the same period, literacy in English increased from 5 to 11.6 percent.¹⁷ Thus, in twenty-five years the percentage of citizens literate in English had risen from a quarter to almost half the total literate population. Indeed, this was probably the era that accelerated the journey of English towards becoming an 'Indian' language. The 1931 census classified 9.2 percent of citizens as 'bilingual', quickly adding however that this was a 'plainly much underestimated' figure.¹⁸

Significantly, the colonial state brought its institutional apparatus of repression to bear on the material artifacts of print production and circulation, seen as fundamental to the emergence of various forms of critical modernism. The Press and Defense of India Acts were used to coerce the *Chronicle* and other nationalist papers and, ultimately, to expel Horniman from India; customs authorities were instructed to be on the lookout for 'hand printing machines fitted with Persian and Indian type face for communist propaganda purposes'; these could easily be 'fitted into a small portmanteau' and 'carried as travelling luggage';¹⁹ indeed a postal *cordon sanitaire* attempted to keep

¹⁶This was probably the highest literacy rate of any contemporary colonial city, and it was a figure which the national all-India aggregate would only reach in 1961. D. P. Pattanayak, *Multilingualism and Mother-Tongue Education* (Delhi 1981), p. 44.

¹⁷*CI*, 1901, vol. x: Bombay (Town & Island), part v, p. 34-36; and 1931, vol. ix: The cities of the Bombay Presidency, p. 35.

¹⁸*ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁹GOB Revenue Department Resolution, 9 Aug. 1923; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1923.

out not only “communist” publications, but any literature potentially critical of the colonial *status quo*.²⁰

In the city, journalists’ and activists’ homes were periodically raided in the search for non-registered, “illegal” printers while schools, libraries and reading-rooms were provided with only government-approved material. State repression was however unable to prevent the production, circulation, and exchange of new ideas within the city; conducted through an expanding, bilingual urban press, and through a variety of oral platforms, this process contributed massively to the radicalisation of public opinion.

This diffusion of new ideas on an urban world characterized by extreme material inequalities also led to unprecedented social agitation. Workers now found in strikes and in trade union activity promising class combinations to attempt to reverse the steady deterioration of their living conditions. The spate of strikes and the growth of trade unions in the early post-war era thus represented another dimension of critical modernism. It is true that until the mid-1920s, these unions were not “radical” and were primarily concerned with improving the welfare of workers within unchanged colonial/capitalist relations of production. As a result, from very early on, they faced attempts at cooption (rather than outright repression) by the colonial state.

I argue, however, that this very focusing on welfare issues was part of a new demand for social rights which included housing and other material deprivations of urban labour. This should also be seen in relation to simultaneous demands for the expansion of civil and political rights. Overall, this global urban pressure on the colonial state amounted to a radical challenge aimed at a substantial extension of citizenship rights while offering, at the same time, an implicit programme for national renewal.

Critical modernism in Bombay during this period can thus be defined as the articulation of citizenship aspirations conducive to urban renewal, and inherent in the dynamism of the new age. Its social base was constituted by the mass of

²⁰No distinction was made between communist and social democratic publications, while correspondence between Bombay activists and left-wing figures in Britain was routinely intercepted.

disenfranchised citizens, led by sections of the middle class intelligentsia increasingly active in the world of labour. It thus spoke in a polyphony of voices: journalists, political activists, social reformers, labour organisers, women's groups, workers, tenants, students; its arenas, too, were multi-locational: the press, the public platform, the street, the neighbourhood, the workplace, the municipal chamber. It confronted a range of particular vested interests responsible for the iniquitous material conditions of urban life, buttressed by a local colonial state intent on preserving its own sacrosanct political traditions. This thesis tells the story of some of these confrontations.

It has relied on newspapers, reports, pamphlets, official records and private papers, which are simultaneously artifactual remains as well as representations of Bombay life during this period. The artifactual nature of these sources mean that they were deeply embedded in the material world of their time, providing direct access to real processes of social change even before we consider what they actually say. The new mode of production of the daily newspaper, for instance, was part of the wider process of modernist transformations of the urban world.²¹ This awareness that the sources themselves represent an indissoluble unity of material process and consciousness, has shaped the philosophy of this work which has sought to locate "discourses" firmly within the changing material world of this era.²²

Finally, this thesis also attempts, implicitly, to suggest the fruitfulness of a comparative approach. This is founded as much on the belief that urban industrial formations in the modern era are eminently comparable, as on the view that it is through the delineation of contrasts that the singularity of colonial urbanism can best be established. Indeed, the urban framework invites the consideration of possibilities that

²¹The introduction of the 'double octuple' rotary machine now enabled a dramatic increase in both the speed and volume of newspaper production which led to appreciable price reductions. The *Times of India's* drop from four annas to one anna in 1915 is credited with providing the paper, for the first time, with a substantial Indian readership. Times of India Sesquicentennial Books: *Feedback. Letters to the Editor of the Times of India* (Times of India Books, Bombay 1989), p. 10.

²²For a recent eloquent plea for a return to the 'material world' in historical research, see Raj Chandavarkar's introduction to his *Imperial Power and Popular Politics* (Cambridge 1998), pp. 21-22, 28-29.

something may yet be learnt from a synchronic juxtaposition of Indian and Western societies. Moreover, connections and comparisons between Bombay and other cities, both in India and abroad, were very much in the minds of contemporaries.

During this period, the celebratory motto of *Urbs Prima in Indis*, coined by the city's elites to mark the first phase of colonial urbanism in the nineteenth century, was giving way to a new awareness of Bombay as a world city, one of a select club of about twenty world-wide conurbations with a population of over a million inhabitants.²³ More people now lived in this Indian city than in any British city with the exception of London, and Bombay's competitors for the "status" of "second city of the Empire" were limited to Calcutta, Glasgow, and Birmingham.

The 1921 Census listed Bombay demographically alongside the other identified major cities of the world. Bombay's 1, 175, 914 inhabitants placed the city behind only New York, London, Paris, Chicago, Petrograd (St. Petersburg), Tokyo, Berlin, Philadelphia, Vienna, and Buenos Aires. It ranked alongside Moscow, Rio de Janeiro, Budapest, Glasgow, and Calcutta, and ahead of Peking (Beijing), Shanghai, Hamburg, Istanbul, Birmingham, and Liverpool.²⁴

A reading of the press and of municipal debates reveals a creative quest to understand and make greater sense of the city's problems by drawing on the experience of other world cities. Comparisons were now being made across the entire range of institutional and social processes which affected the city's well-being: State policies and obligations, the range of civic rights, the performance of municipalities and of public transport systems; urban prices and wages, landlordism, and the concentration of the city's poor in overcrowded, high-rent areas; approaches to town-planning and to the eradication of disease.

²³*CI*, 1921, vol. ix, p. 1.

²⁴*ibid.*

In highlighting the possibilities of comparative method, this thesis thus also pays tribute to one of the ways in which the citizens of Bombay were themselves attempting to move towards the definition of a more humane city during this period.

Chapter one: Colonial modernism and the flawed paradigms of urban renewal.

1. Contrasting urban landscapes: uneven spatial development and social stratification.

Bombay was not an indigeneous Indian city. It did not evolve from an original sacred centre or a place of pilgrimage, but represents the outcome of a colonial capitalist process which created its own stratified urban forms. This process of production of an uneven social space was distinctive in its colonial realisation, while also related to the more general problematic of social inequality characteristic of modern industrial cities.¹

The production of Bombay as a social space subsumes the processes of urbanization and industrialization. The city, of course, predated its industrialization. By the mid-nineteenth century, a built environment potentially supportive of capitalist industrialization was already in existence. It provided a concentration of assets in the form of entrepreneurs, capital, and technologies, as well as of financial institutions, necessary for industrial enterprise. In this sense, industrialization was merely a phase in the constant production and renewal of colonial urban space:² while underlining and accentuating social inequalities, industrial development did not in itself significantly alter the fundamental colonial patterning of the city into a series of uneven spatial templates.

Under the controlling hand of the East India Company, Bombay was originally created as a built environment to facilitate the extraction and concentration of vast

¹See particularly Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford 1991); *Le droit à la ville* (Paris 1968/72); David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Oxford 1988); *The Urban Experience* (Oxford 1989).

²Significantly, the rate of the city's population increase during the initial phase of industrialization between 1864 and 1891 remained lower than during the commercial boom years of 1846-64. The already dense population of 'B' and 'C' wards, for instance, was attributed to 'the commercial delirium of the early sixties'. The population increase over the last decades of the century should, moreover, be attributed to the vast array of activities involved in the overall transformation of urban space--reclamations, construction of homes, public buildings, railway stations, road and water works, dockyards, tramway extensions, markets, temples, and mosques--rather than just to the growth of cotton spinning and weaving factories. *CI*, 1901, vol. x part iv, p. 141-42; part v, p. 17.

quantities of cotton and opium from its rural hinterland, and to enable their shipment abroad; these commodities provided the basis for a flourishing colonial trade with China,³ while cotton exports to England contributed significantly to new domestic consumption patterns which paved the way for Britain's industrial take off.⁴ Spatially, Bombay was thus conceived as a regional centre of capital accumulation, at the heart of an export-oriented network of communications centred on its port. This was expressed, in terms of human geography, by a settlement area gradually expanding west-north-westwards from the fortified harbour area along the south-eastern shore of the original island.

Social labour created much of the surface land that gradually expanded and joined together the original seven small islands, enabling their progressive urban metamorphosis into "Bombay." A virtually continuous process of land reclamation from the sea, and of construction of vellards, bunders, and causeways, enabled the development of built structures and the gradual expansion of human settlement. The construction of Hornby Vellard in the late 18th century connected north and south Bombay and made habitable the centre of the island, otherwise inundated during high tide; while the completion of the Sion, Worli, Colaba, and Mahim causeways during the first half of the 19th century finally linked the islands into one landmass.⁵

The development of built structures between the early eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries produced the Fort as the city's dominant social space. In the vicinity of Bombay Castle, the East India Company's seat of government (one of the few pre-existing built structures inherited from the Portuguese), bastions, batteries, and fortified gates created a walled area which controlled access to and from the settlement and the steadily expanding port and harbour. To the west, a semi-circular swathe of ground was cleared to provide an open space, the Esplanade, within direct firing range

³Amar Farooqui, *Urban Development in a Colonial Situation: Early Nineteenth Century Bombay*, in *EPW*, (October 5 1996), pp. 2748-49.

⁴Washbrook, *From Comparative Sociology ..*, pp. 417-19.

⁵Sharada Dwivedi & Rahul Mehrotra, *Bombay: The Cities Within* (Bombay 1995), pp. 20, 45, 78.

from the fortified area. Such military security reinforced the Fort's desirability as the prime location for both commerce and residence.⁶

Military force was thus inscribed in the newly produced social space which became the nucleus of early British Bombay, extending southwards to Colaba. From very early on, however, the Company's enforced reliance upon native brokers to secure profitable commercial transactions with the Bombay hinterland, ensured the granting of property rights⁷ to elite merchant communities who thus participated in the creation of urban space within the Fort. Baniyas, Bohras, and particularly, Parsis, settled in the northern quarter of the walled town where the construction of indigeneous houses, shops, and warehouses, the emergence of street markets, and the activities of *shroffs*, traders, and hawkers, effectively created the locality which became known as Bazaargate.⁸

Nonetheless, an informal racial division did emerge within the boundaries of the Fort. Churchgate Street came to function as an intangible line of demarcation separating the British settlement to the south 'crowded with whitewashed English homes with covered piazzas' from the 'brightly painted and carved ethnic Indian houses' to the north. Moreover, while the British strove to ensure that, south of Churchgate Street, building sites were controlled and that architectural and design considerations were applied to the organisation of social space, no strict building regulations were enforced either in north Fort or in the rapidly growing "Indian town" just beyond the fortifications.⁹

It was here that enabling colonial property rights led to the emergence of predominantly 'Indian' social space: Girgaum, Bhuleshwar, Kalbadevi, Dhobi Talao, Pydhuni, Chakla, Umarkhadi, Mandvi, Dongri. While the various *mohallas* and *wadis* (neighbourhoods) of these localities derived their distinctive identities from the *jati*

⁶ibid., pp. 19-22.

⁷For a full discussion of their implications, see chapter four.

⁸Dwivedi & Mehrotra, pp. 29-31.

⁹ibid., pp. 28, 38. In 1839, legislation was passed limiting the height of buildings in the Fort to 50 feet, but little attempt seems to have been made to enforce it in the northern sector. Farooqui, p. 2753.

(caste), religion, language, or occupation of the majority of their residents,¹⁰ this was an urban landscape nonetheless primarily structured by the needs of commerce: land use here was mixed commercial-residential, with the same building serving merchants and traders both as residence (on the upper floors) and as the *pedhi* (shop) from which they conducted their wholesale or retail businesses.¹¹ This landscape also came to accommodate the major cloth, bullion, and jewellery markets established by wealthy merchants, as well as the numerous *godowns* (warehouses) that served them.¹²

The overwhelming concentration of commercial activities and employment opportunities in the Fort led to a diverse population influx which very quickly caused urban congestion. By the early 19th century, this core urban area easily had the highest density of persons per house while the rate of increase in such settlements as Mandvi, Market, and Dongri, just to the north, was even higher.¹³ The demand for housing also led to a sharp rise in the value of land which was becoming an increasingly scarce resource. Investment in urban real estate provided lucrative new opportunities for indigenous merchants who had prospered through the opium and cotton trade with China. There soon emerged a new "class faction" of landlords whose determination to secure 'all possible advantage of the area in their possession by building to its full depth',¹⁴ led to the production of a uniquely degraded form of social space: the high-density, overcrowded tenement chawl.¹⁵

Into these chawls poured successive waves of migrant workers from the Konkan and Deccan. This was primarily an unskilled, casual labour force in search of seasonal employment offered by the construction trades, the expansion in dockyards, and the

¹⁰Jim Masselos, *Appropriating Urban Space: Social Constructs Of Bombay In The Time of the Raj*, in *South Asia* vol. xiv no. 1 (June 1991), p. 37.

¹¹Mariam Dossal, *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City 1845-1875* (Delhi 1991), p. 17.

¹²Masselos, *Appropriating Urban Space*., pp. 36-37; Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 22.

¹³Farooqui, p. 2749;

¹⁴*ibid.*, p. 2753.

¹⁵It was 'a form of tenement designed to accommodate the largest number of people in the smallest possible area.' Meera Kosambi, *Bombay in Transition. The growth and social ecology of a colonial city 1880-1980* (Stockholm 1986), p. 46.

increase in port and maritime activities. Some were able to combine this work with self-employed retailing of the daily necessities of urban life, particularly as itinerant hawkers and street vendors. As in all cities before the advent of public transport, there was no option but to live within walking distance of the workplace: for the newly arrived labourers, this meant seeking chawl accommodation in those areas of the 'native town' closest to the Fort and the port area. Here, bad housing--dark, poorly ventilated, and overcrowded--combined with their *katcha* (ie unpaved) surroundings and the absence of drains and sewers to produce "foul air" and a disease-prone environment. In these circumstances, fevers and diseases such as tuberculosis were routine while epidemics like cholera and malaria frequently visited upon the poor during the first half of the 19th century.¹⁶

Thus, well before the impact of industrialization, the colonial desire to create a homely landscape out of an "alien" physical environment combined with the spatial impact of an unregulated commercial capitalism, had produced a qualitative hierarchy of social spaces. While functioning as the nerve-centre of the colonial military-commercial complex, South Fort was also created as a British "home from home", drawing to itself the maximum social and civic amenities. Here, built forms were essentially organised to convey an aesthetic sense of spaciousness: the archetypal house in the European settlement, the low-built one-storey bungalow, was an original colonial creation. Situated in an open space enclosed by a fence, the bungalow, with its shaded verandah and rooms oriented to admit every breeze, was not only a privileged response to climatic conditions; it also served as a marker of its inhabitants' superior social status.¹⁷

Moreover, with the exception of the water-supply which remained problematic until the second half of the century, South Fort was well lit, well paved, and provided with covered drains. It was also, of course, the space of political power. New buildings

¹⁶Farooqui, pp. 2750, 2754; Dossal, p. 126.

¹⁷Anthony King, *The Bungalow. The production of a global culture* (London 1984), pp. 46-47.

like the massive Town Hall, with its distinctive Corinthian interiors, and the Mint, with its conspicuous Ionic portico, were built in the dominant European neo-classical style whose 'ordered beauty' expressed the British conception of how power and prestige ought to be represented in built form.¹⁸ The Mint also symbolized the increasing penetration of capitalist institutions while the Town Hall signified a new colonial consciousness of the city's importance in the imperial network of trade.

In contrast, North Fort, with its high rise houses closely crowded together, and its rows of shops, busy market, and street bazaar, was already by mid-century a highly congested settlement.¹⁹ It was unpaved and poorly lit, while unregulated building had rendered its streets uneven and dangerous. These conditions were even more prominent in the 'Native Town', with its generally less affluent Indian residents, just beyond the fort walls. Here, haphazard built structures, crowded into narrow, winding lanes provided the social space for a large variety of small-scale commercial activities. Richer merchants tended to occupy residences along street fronts, leaving the urban poor to congregate in chawls and tenements in the rear, interior spaces.²⁰

The original character of the Fort as the growing settlement's prime social space, combining military, governmental, commercial, and residential functions, entailed a number of cumulative consequences: as economic functions, in particular, grew, they produced built structures that very quickly exerted severe pressure on the available land surface area within the fortified walls. By the early 19th century, the Fort's 'substantial buildings' had spilt over to almost three miles into the Indian town.²¹ Over the course of the century, 'warehouse room' continued to expand at the expense of residential space in both north and south Fort.²² As a result, European settlement gradually migrated to Malabar Hill, Cumballa Hill, and Breach Candy--prime residential land

¹⁸Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*. The New Cambridge History of India, III.4 (Cambridge 1994), p. 51.

¹⁹Kosambi, p. 45.

²⁰Dossal, p. 23.

²¹Farooqui, p. 2753.

²²*CI*, 1901, vol. x part iv, p. 128.

fronting the sea in the south-west and west of the island; even here, however, the British were never able to exclude elite Indians from acquiring land and building houses.²³

The transfer of authority from the East India Company to the British Crown following the Rebellion of 1857 led to a drive to reconstruct social space in the Fort. Additional land was created through the demolition of the ramparts and reclamations from the sea as the colonial authorities now strove to erase built signs of their military origins and highlight instead the city as a prosperous centre of commercial enterprise illustrative of colonial power and prestige. Facing the Town Hall, a circular garden park enclosed by a complex of architecturally unified commercial buildings was created as Elphinstone Circle. Similarly, the Esplanade was reorganised from a single open space into four separate *maidans*, while the removal of the fortifications also enabled the emergence of major new roads providing south Bombay, for the first time, with north-south as well as east-west axes.²⁴

The renewal of social space in the Fort now had an explicitly imperial objective. The opened up sites were occupied by planned public buildings designed to display the architectural arts of a “superior” civilization. During the late 19th century, there thus emerged a range of public edifices in the ‘neo-Gothic’ style originally devised by John Ruskin and William Morris as, ironically, a rebellion against the tastelessness of mainstream British Victorian architecture. The Bombay High Court, the Secretariat, the University Library and Convocation Hall, and the Municipal Corporation were some of the Gothic buildings that conferred a new landscape upon the Fort. At the same time, the siting of the ^{main} railway terminal at Victoria Terminus and the architecturally grand station that enclosed ^{it}, clinched the Fort’s function as the spatial embodiment of a new colonial modernism.

²³Farooqui, p. 2753. Parsi-owned houses were generally occupied by Europeans. While Farooqui attributes this solely to ‘cultural preference’--Parsis being unwilling to live in a predominantly European quarter, it is more likely that these houses were seen by their owners as shrewd investments bringing in high rental returns.

²⁴Dossal, pp. 192-93; Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 90.

With its deliberate, unsubtle symbolism--it featured mounted figures representing 'Progress' as well as 'Commerce' and 'Engineering',²⁵ the Victoria Terminus building encapsulated the colonial conception of modernity. In the colonial context of late 19th century Bombay, "progress" meant an unquestioned adherence to the competitive norms of commercial capitalism now facilitated by the new technologies of speed--the railway, the tramway, the telegraph. No doubt, the Bombay government generally favoured manufacturing interests in Britain and local 'Anglo-Indian' commercial lobbies now organised in the Bombay Chamber of Commerce; however, the strength of Indian merchant enterprise, particularly through the trade in opium, enabled a growing process of indigeneous capital accumulation which was channeled both into urban real estate and the built environment, and subsequently into industrial development.

A multi-caste urban bourgeoisie, these *shetias* benefitted both from the British government's abrogation of the East India Company's trading monopolies and from the gradual consolidation of capitalist property rights during the course of the 19th century. A proportion of their considerable profits from trade was reinvested in urban real estate; already by the 1850s, it was estimated that half of the island of Bombay was owned by shetia-landlords.²⁶ Investment in land and buildings not only brought lucrative returns but also enabled a more flexible strategy of capital accumulation.

Meanwhile, as competition from British expatriate capital in the export trade grew ever more intense, a new demand for Indian raw cotton emerged as a result of the American Civil War. This created a boom period of capital accumulation for indigeneous merchants²⁷ and new possibilities of diversification as a result of the city's

²⁵ibid., p. 105.

²⁶Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership ..*, p. 12.

²⁷Of this new wealth, 'some 6 million pounds sterling' was spent on land reclamations so that by 1872 'the area of the whole island had risen from 18. 62 square miles to over 22 square miles.' Once again, however, it was the south and its commercial ventures that primarily benefitted, the new space being entirely devoted to roads, railways, docks, and warehouses. *CI*, 1901, vol. x part iv, p. 128; Dossal, p. 219.

easy access to sources of both raw cotton and cheap labour: by the 1860s, capital began to be increasingly invested in the building of cotton mills.²⁸

By the latter stages of the nineteenth century, the production of the urban environment thus reflected the increasingly intense competition for profitable investments between European and Indian elites, a conflict within dominant class factions. The new hegemony of *laissez faire* economic doctrines meant that space was conceived primarily as a commodity, and that its transformation into urban forms was entrusted to competitive market forces. As in European cities, this precluded any overall approach to urban planning and the development of a concomitant civic sense of the public good. It promoted an essentially fragmentary view of the city, leaving Indian and colonial elites free to develop social spaces as they wished, within their respective bits of territory. Thus, while the Fort was re-created as the colonial image centre, built spaces in the Indian town were primarily generated by the drive for the most rewarding exchange values.

Employment prospects generated by the new public buildings, the development in communications, and the extension of dockyards led to a dramatic increase in the urban population, ‘..all attracted into a comparatively small portion of the island’. Landlords and speculative builders attempted to make the most of the consequent housing demand and rising rents by building tenements and erecting additional storeys to old buildings ‘totally unfit to bear their weight’.²⁹ As a result, Chakla grew to an average of eighteen houses per acre, ‘huge four-storeyed dwelling places, with scarcely room for a sweeper to pass between them’.³⁰ Mandvi was described as ‘pre-eminently in a position to become the plague-centre of the island’ by the 1880s. It was ‘choked with population and notorious for its insanitary condition’. Houses had sprung up ‘storey upon storey’ and now ‘stretched towards the docks, climbed tier by tier up the old portion of the Dongri Kolis..spread away to Dhobi Talao, Bhuleshwar, Khara Talao, and northward,

²⁸Raj Chandavarkar, *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India. Business strategies and the working classes in Bombay, 1900-1940* (Cambridge 1994), p. 65.

²⁹CI, 1901, vol. x part iv, p. 135.

³⁰ibid., vol. x part v, p. 15.

till they faced the new buildings which a growing mill-industry..was bringing during this period into existence..' 31

Indeed, by the end of the century, a new industrial landscape, created out of the filling in of previously empty lowlands, had emerged virtually adjoining the northern portion of the congested Indian town. The local colonial state's desire that industrial space be located as far as possible from the imperial centre of the Fort and the elite residential settlements of Malabar Hill and Cumballa Hill,³² coupled with the enticement of cheaper land values, ensured that shetias-turned-industrialists built their cotton mills and workshops in the sparsely populated urban villages of Tardeo, Lalbag, and West Parel.

With little interest shown in providing accommodation for the mill workers by either the colonial state, millowners, or the newly established Bombay Municipal Corporation, the housing issue was, like everything else, left to seek a market solution. As a result, entrepreneurial landlords built the most basic tenement chawls on the premise that the chronically low-waged workers would only be able to pay a cursory rent. In the absence of regulations specifying minimum adequate living space, home amenities, and open space between buildings, one-room tenements were erected on 'every inch of available land' without connections to drains or sewer pipes. 'Innumerable chawls' sprang up north of Bellasis Road, and 'all the open land in Tardeo' was gradually built over and 'as fast as the houses were built there appeared a population to inhabit them'; while Byculla was said to contain 'some of the worst one-

³¹ *ibid.*, vol. x part iv, p. 150.

³² Since the early 19th century, 'noxious' industries were continually being removed from south Bombay and relocated in the north. In 1872 the Municipal Health Officer warned that the health of the predominantly European residents of Cumballa Hill was at risk due to the sudden mushrooming of mill workers' huts in nearby Tardeo; while the government-appointed Bombay Extension Committee recommended, in 1887, that particular northern districts only be designated for further industrial development. Masselos, *Appropriating Urban Space..*, p. 36; Frank Conlon, *Industrialization and the Housing Problem in Bombay, 1850-1940*, in K. Ballhatchet & D. Taylor (eds), *Changing South Asia: Economy and Society* (London 1984), pp. 158-59.

room tenements in Bombay'. The bulk of this population was described as living in 'incredible poverty' on a 'starvation diet'.³³

Industrial social space thus represented an exacerbation of the overcrowded and insanitary conditions already prevailing in the Indian town. By the end of the century, a new city had indeed come into being, but one that was marked by environmental degradation, human poverty, and health pandemics. Unhealthy and overcrowded buildings threatened the lives of their occupants, facilitating the spread of tuberculosis and respiratory diseases; the coal-powered cotton mills, railway locomotives, engineering workshops, and government Mint churned out thick black smoke which caused a deterioration in air quality, and further increased susceptibility to respiratory illnesses. Lingering dark clouds brought about 'a marked change..over localities such as Byculla, Parel, Tardeo, Tarwadi and even remote Sewri.'³⁴ The very topography of the city, built on flatlands between the sea and the coastal hills, worked against the rapid dispersal of industrial emissions. During the day, the prevailing sea-breeze funneled the smoke-filled air towards the hills; however, the direction of the night-time breeze ensured, for much of the year, that the polluted air drifted back over the city again.³⁵

The Municipal Corporation expanded the city's water-supply, but in a manner which favoured the growth of commercial and industrial activities rather than the needs of ordinary citizens³⁶, and much of it remained unfiltered; moreover, this increase was not matched by the construction of a comprehensive drainage system, leaving the vast majority of districts north of the Fort without adequate drains or sewers. As a result, the environmental impact of five million extra gallons per day of undrained surface water tilted a fragile urban balance further towards disease-prone conditions. Much of the soil in the low-lying central localities of the city remained water-logged and liable to be

³³ibid., pp. 151, 144.

³⁴*CI*, 1901. vol. x, part iv, p. 151.

³⁵Nigel Crook, *Principles of Population and Development* (Oxford 1998), p. 81.

³⁶It was estimated that out of a total urban supply of 36 million gallons in the early 1920s, 17 million were supplied to commercial and industrial enterprises. *BC*, 6 May 1921.

permeated by disease microbes, creating a favourable ecology for the spread of malaria and plague.³⁷

The severity of the end-of-century plague pandemic revealed the environmental degeneration caused by half a century of *laissez-faire* urban development in which land and buildings were primarily resources for capital accumulation by urban elites. This had allowed private owners and users of land virtually absolute freedom to produce localized built structures and social spaces which came to exercise a progressively degenerative impact on the global urban fabric. Disease showed little respect for class-driven spatial boundaries, demonstrating to panic-stricken colonial authorities the fallacy of their fragmented approach to the urban environment.

³⁷Ira Klein, *Urban Development and Death: Bombay City, 1870-1914*, in *MAS* 20, 4 (1986), pp. 735-45.

2. Competing colonialisms: urban 'improvement', development agencies, and the local colonial state.

Bombay followed the tradition of pre-industrial urban Europe where plague and congestion had often spurred the renewal of city centres.³⁸ The "old plague" of medieval European knowledge had now, however, arrived in a city simultaneously experiencing the impact both of an indigenously-driven initial phase of industrialization, and--as a result of Bombay's position in the imperial market-place--of the technological innovations and artifacts associated with the second industrial revolution of the late 19th century in the West.

Plague initially induced severe restrictions against ships from India, disrupting Bombay's export trade and virtually paralysing the city's commercial life.³⁹ The pandemic thus posed a real threat both to the colonial nurturing of the city as the urban jewel in the imperial crown, and to the interests of indigenous merchants, industrialists, and Anglo-Indian businessmen. Beyond the urgency--and severity--of immediate measures, there was thus widespread elite consensus that a new, bold initiative was required to "clean up" the city. However, in the absence of any real local medical knowledge about plague⁴⁰, and of even less colonial interest in the political dimensions of the major improvements in public health secured by contemporary British cities⁴¹, the official mind seized upon slum clearance and reinforced social segregation as the crucial elements of urban renewal.

³⁸Helen Meller, *Urban renewal and citizenship: the quality of life in British cities, 1890-1990*, in *Urban History* vol. 22, pt. 1 (May 1995), p. 63.

³⁹Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine 1859-1914* (Cambridge 1994), p. 134.

⁴⁰*ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴¹In particular, the municipalisation of local government in the late 19th century, with councillors now elected on an enlarged franchise, led to improved and expanded urban services (housing, water, transport, street cleansing, parks, gas, electricity, sewage purification, maternity welfare) often directly operated by municipalities. These were largely paid for by taxes on the rental value of property. See Tom Hart, *Urban Growth*

Thus one element, and scarcely the most successful, was abstracted from the range of enabling social, political, and ideological forces that were achieving incremental public health gains in Glasgow, and made to serve as the model for urban 'improvement' in Bombay. The example of the Glasgow Improvement Trust⁴² led to the formation, in 1898, of the Bombay City Improvement Trust. Dominated by local elites⁴³, the Trust hardly seemed a likely purveyor of new ideas on urban regeneration. With its initial focus on slum clearance as the primary instrument of sanitary reform, the new body passed over a unique opportunity to draw on the lessons of decades of British "improvement" schemes whose neglect of housing provision had generally resulted in the exacerbation, rather than the abolition, of overcrowding.⁴⁴

Armed with compulsory powers of property acquisition under the terms of the City of Bombay Improvement Act of 1898,⁴⁵ the Trust, therefore, accorded its urgent attention to the removal of insanitary slums. It was to act on the basis of priority areas designated or 'represented' by the Municipal Commissioner.⁴⁶ Apart from direct clearance, slums were also to be attacked through the 'indirect' method of opening up congested neighbourhoods through road building. The provision of sanitary homes for workers received, in contrast, much lower priority.⁴⁷

and Municipal Government: Glasgow in Comparative Context 1846-1914, in A. Slaven/D.H Aldcroft (eds), *Business, Banking, and Urban History* (Edinburgh 1982).

⁴²The Trust's essential strategy of recouping the costs of slum demolition and new housing through the sale of high value land around the city centre failed; this led to the abandonment of the major part of its housing schemes for workers. Hart, *Urban Growth...*, p. 207.

⁴³The Board comprised the Military Commander of Bombay District, the Collector of Land Revenue, the Municipal Commissioner, leading members of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and the Millowners Association, and two elected representatives of the Municipal Corporation, the prominent *shetias* Dinsha Wacha and Ibrahim Rahimtoola. *BITR* 1907, p. iv.

⁴⁴Conlon, *Industrialization...*, p. 162.

⁴⁵This embodied all the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 with the significant exception of section 23 (2) which provided for the payment to the property owner of a sum equivalent to 15 percent of the market value of the land acquired. *BC*, 15 April 1925.

⁴⁶*BITR* 1920, p. 116.

⁴⁷The Trust later admitted that the provision of working-class housing was never one of its fundamental aims. *GOB Local Self Government Proceedings* 1919, p. 1648.

An important component of the Trust's work involved the development into suitable building sites of vacant lands handed over by the Bombay government and the Municipal Corporation: yet house building on these lands was never conceived in relation to the needs of those made homeless as a result of the slum clearance operations. Land acquisition was funded by the raising of low-interest loans;⁴⁸ in addition, the Trust also received yearly grants from both government and municipality, though it was hoped that eventually, the proceeds of leasing the developed plots of land would make up the larger part of the Trust's revenue.⁴⁹

The inhabitants of the initial slum target areas, in Nagpada, Mandvi, Market, and Chandanvadi, found themselves compulsorily evicted without being offered alternative accommodation. Alongside the Trust's operations, the Municipality's enforcement of the new Epidemic Diseases Act compounded the problem of dishousing. The Act required the excision of a tier of living rooms in the middle of deep, insanitary houses so as to create a 'chowk' to allow light and air into the buildings. The majority of those evicted, belonging to the poorest class of tenants, attempted to find accommodation in surviving tenements in the same neighbourhoods. The result was a renewed '...overcrowding of houses in the very slums the Municipal Commissioner was seeking to improve and just outside the areas the Trust was clearing of slums'.⁵⁰

The Trust's construction of working-class tenements for the poorest of those dishoused remained, during the first decade of its existence, grossly inadequate. By 1909, 11,301 families, numbering well over 50,000 people, had been evicted from demolished one-room tenements, while the new sanitary Trust chawls at Nagpada,

⁴⁸Loans were raised at 4 percent per annum over a period of 60 years. During the first decade of its existence, the Trust raised Rs. 324 lakhs in capital, of which Rs. 235 lakhs was spent on buying properties. S. M Edwardes, *The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island* (Bombay 1909), vol. III, p. 86.

⁴⁹The Municipal Corporation provided the bulk of this financial assistance, originally Rs. 4.75 lakhs in 1900-01; by 1919-20 its contribution had risen to Rs. 15.1 lakhs. This compared with the annual subsidy of Rs. 2 lakhs provided by the Bombay government. *BMCR* 1919-20, p. 137.

⁵⁰J. P Orr, *Social Reform and Slum Reform* (Bombay 1917), part II, p. 23.

Mandvi, Chandanvadi, and Byculla, only contained 2,844 rooms.⁵¹ Slum eradication thus led to an increased demand for housing which immediately resulted in a sharp rise in rents. This demand was largely met by private landlords adding new storeys to their old insanitary tenements. Indeed, as fast as 'many houses had chowks cut in them' they 'also had storeys added'. Not only did this result in the reproduction of congestion⁵² but also in an increase in the costs of acquiring slum property by the Improvement Trust.⁵³ The Trust found, for instance, that between 1901 and 1913, of the 41 houses included in its Undria Street scheme, 14 had had lofts removed and storeys added resulting in the virtual doubling of the average assessment per house from Rs.441 to Rs.867.⁵⁴

The one-dimensional attack on congestion through slum eradication thus floundered on the housing issue. Repeating the British experience, the Trust's rapid clearing of targetted slums was not matched by the construction of adequate and affordable homes, thus enabling landlords to step in and simply continue their practice of erecting the most hazardous and unhealthy built structures to accomodate the urban poor.⁵⁵ Their control over the Municipal Corporation, strengthened by the colonial state's refusal to democratize the municipal franchise, ensured the Corporation's continued ability to resist the adoption of a uniform, sanitary building code.⁵⁶ Minor amendments in 1910 failed to bring the building by-laws in line with those of Calcutta which there were now

⁵¹ibid.

⁵²Ultimately perhaps the most self-critical of the colonial agencies, the Trust subsequently readily admitted this. Its initial operations had '..tended only to make bad worse, to intensify congestion where it already existed and to extend it to comparatively open areas just beyond the original congested zone'. *BITR* 1919, p. 121.

⁵³These costs were already high as the Trust had no power to acquire only parts of buildings. *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1916, p. 930.

⁵⁴Orr, *Social Reform...*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁵The dominant *shetia* class argument against sanitary housing for workers was put with lapidary precision by Ibrahim Rahimtoola: it would necessarily mean higher rents and therefore an increase in the costs of labour which would adversely affect 'the city's prosperity'. Combining the perspectives of merchant, industrialist, and landlord, Rahimtoola could see the housing issue from the points of view of all three class factions. *Report of the Bombay Development Committee* 1914, p. xxvii.

⁵⁶The revocation, in 1912, of the powers of 'Plague Commissioner' invested in the Municipal Commissioner represented another victory for landlords. Ibid., p. ix.

strict regulations governing rear open spaces and the proportion of a house site that might be built upon.⁵⁷ Thus, while sanitary building was introduced on Improvement Trust estates, unregulated development continued to be the norm outside Trust land, providing substantial profits for building speculators.⁵⁸

Indeed, the Trust's presence on the urban scene at first signified little apparent change in the ability of a host of other authorities, both private and public, to pursue their own individual developmental interests. The Municipal Corporation continued to be responsible for a range of public works which included road construction, improvements of streets and buildings, water works and drainage schemes; the Railways and Tramways pursued the extension of their operations to new parts of the city, laying tracks and building assembly and repair workshops as well as station yards. The Bombay government itself was a prime developmental agency, commissioning a series of grandiose, architecturally innovative public buildings in south Bombay between 1901 and 1914. Meanwhile, industrialists were adding new factories to an expanding industrial landscape in the north-west, while new business premises were springing up both in the Indian town and in the Fort.

Very quickly, however, the Improvement Trust's operations on the land market and its emergence as a substantial landowner in its own right brought the new body into open conflict with the influential landlord faction which dominated the Municipal Corporation. By 1915, Trust estates comprised ten percent of urban land,⁵⁹ though less than one-third of these holdings had been developed for building purposes.⁶⁰ Moreover, it was not only landlords who experienced the Trust's operations as a threat to their continuing opportunities for profitable investments both in landed property and the built environment. Its interventions necessarily led to intensified competition for

⁵⁷J. P Orr, *Social Reform...*, pp. 18-19. The Corporation was even unwilling to pass legislation empowering it to declare individual rooms unfit for human habitation even though such a measure was strongly recommended by a Municipal Sub-Committee in 1912. *BITR* 1915, p. 26.

⁵⁸*BITR* 1919, p. 121.

⁵⁹*BC*, 6 Feb. 1917.

⁶⁰Edwardes, *The Gazeteer...*, vol. III, p. 88.

scarce urban land, with each of the dominant class factions finding their options, in an era of escalating prices, drastically curtailed. It was becoming increasingly costly to produce social spaces favourable to capital accumulation: the “anarchy” of *laissez-faire* urban development was set to enter a new, more ferociously competitive, stage.

The issue of communications development became a particularly acute arena of conflict during these years. Apparent elite consensus over the idea of road improvements in the city was purely theoretical since virtually any communication scheme, whether the construction of a new avenue or the extension of an old street, meant the disruption of social spaces which incorporated a range of stored capital assets; the mixed commercial-residential landuse in the inner city meant that the requisitioning of buildings adversely affected the interests of both landlords and merchants. Both at Municipal Corporation meetings and on the many official advisory committees they sat on, Ibrahim Rahimtoola and other prominent landlords consistently questioned the ‘necessity and financial desirability’ of projected communication schemes.⁶¹ Similarly, the widening of Abdul Rahman Street, at the heart of the Indian commercial district, was opposed by the Millowners’ Association, the Indian Merchants’ Chamber, and the Piecegoods Merchants’ Association.⁶²

Major road projects, moreover, also risked encroaching upon the developmental ambitions of the railway companies, of pitting tramway against railway, and even--the government of Bombay against the government of India. In 1904, the government of India acquired, on behalf of the GIP Railway, a very substantial area of land at Matunga without informing the Bombay government, the Improvement Trust, or the Municipal Corporation.⁶³ Railway development in this area would clearly affect the Improvement Trust’s and the Municipality’s road construction plans in relation to the new Dadar-Matunga housing development scheme. The Municipal Commissioner slammed the Railway Companies’ ‘land hunger’, accusing them of seeking ‘to turn the city into a

⁶¹*Report of the Bombay Development Committee* 1914, p. xxvii.

⁶²*GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1909, p. 383.

⁶³*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, p. xxiv.

station yard with a few houses dotted about here and there'. Desirable sanitary measures, he added, could not be enforced upon 'these independent bodies', and he appealed to the Bombay government to intervene, as it alone could 'define the limits up to which commercial interests are to be supreme'.⁶⁴

But the Municipal Corporation was itself no stranger to the pursuit of 'commercial interests'. The extension of Churchgate Street in the Fort involved the acquisition of properties, the removal of buildings, the rearrangement of the land into small plots and, with the early post-war boom in land prices, the sale of surplus land by public auction at two thousand rupees per acre.⁶⁵ Brushing aside representations from local residents and shopkeepers requesting a slowing down of the project to enable them to be rehoused within reasonable distance, the Corporation completed the extension within a year. In the process, it made a profit of 'more than Rs. 40 lakhs'.⁶⁶ Street extensions became another arena of competition between the Municipality and the Improvement Trust, each seeking to secure the most projects by claiming credit for pioneering new methods of road construction to meet 'modern traffic conditions'.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Bombay government broadly seemed to accept the view that the Railways had been allowed to appropriate far too much urban space. They now occupied substantial portions of both the eastern and western flanks of the city, when concentration in just one area might have been desirable 'both in terms of trade and for the benefit of residential areas'. Moreover, the railways cut across the main lines of

⁶⁴*GOB Medical Proceedings* 1905, p. 128.

⁶⁵*BMCR* 1919-20, p. 12; *BC*, 19 Jan. 1924.

⁶⁶*BC*, 10 Sept. 1919 and 10 May 1921.

⁶⁷In September 1914, Municipal Commissioner Cadell wrote to the Bombay government alleging that the Trust was keen to 'stick to old methods of construction' which were now 'inadequate'. The Chairman of the Trust quickly despatched a countering memo asserting that it was in fact the Trust, through its Princess Street and New Queen's Road schemes, that had pioneered 'improved methods of road construction in Bombay'. *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1915, pp. 899-900.

road communication leading out of the city, 'causing serious inconvenience to traffic in these thoroughfares'.⁶⁸

The local colonial state, however, drew back from imposing one obvious remedy, the construction of overbridges, as these were 'very costly'.⁶⁹ However, in the same 1907 consultative letter inviting responses from the elite commercial organisations on the 'future development of the City', the Bombay government appeared to be advocating restrictions on the development of the railways in favour of the construction of 'broad northern and southern thoroughfares'.⁷⁰ Given the shape of the island, it was clear that north-south movement had greater potential to open up larger areas for eventual settlement than east-west movement.

Yet, the two major road projects completed during these years, Princess Street and Sandhurst Road, were both east-west thoroughfares. Princess Street extended from Carnac Bridge, just north of the Fort, to Queen's Road on the south-western sea front. The Trust justified the location of this development both on communication and "improvement" grounds: it would ease movement from the southern part of the Indian town to the west of the city while at the same time open up congested neighbourhoods, allowing in sea breezes to ventilate the dense inner city.⁷¹ Once again, however, the large-scale housing demolition the scheme occasioned was not made good by the offer of immediate alternative accommodation. The predictable result was an increase in overcrowding in nearby Cavel, just north-west of the new development where 'large numbers of insanitary houses' had 'new storeys added to them', making light and ventilation in neighbouring houses even worse than before.⁷²

⁶⁸Letter from Bombay Government, General Department, to the Municipal Corporation, Improvement Trust, Chamber of Commerce, Millowners' Association, Port Trust, Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay Presidency Association, GIP and BB&CI Railway Companies, 9 December 1907. *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1909, p. 71.

⁶⁹*ibid.*

⁷⁰*ibid.*, p. 381. It put forward the proposition that Victoria Terminus be made the sole terminal for both GIP and BB & CI lines, thus allowing the latter's stations and depots south of Grant Road to be phased out.

⁷¹Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 161

⁷²J.P Orr, *Density of Population in Bombay* (Bombay 1914), p. 9; *BITR* 1913, p. 127.

While some areas adjacent to Princess Street, notably Dhobi Talao and Chandanvadi on its west side, had their share of slums,⁷³ this was not, by far, the most congested part of the city; it just happened to be close to the prime social space of the Fort. The new thoroughfare proved to be primarily beneficial to colonial and Indian elites, providing them with a quicker route to work on their daily journey from Malabar Hill and Cumballa Hill to the Fort area. Wide enough for the new motor-cars, Princess Street also amplified elite residential movement away from the old city centre towards the west of the island.⁷⁴ It served as an extension and modernization of colonial social space, visually incorporating modern housing estates⁷⁵ and new commercial buildings purposely designed to be architecturally consistent with the built structures of the Fort.⁷⁶ This would not be the last time that an Improvement Trust "development" would benefit the upper classes directly at the expense of the urban poor, while simply shifting congestion from one neighbourhood to the next.

A decade of Trust operations signally failed to have any impact on overall levels of urban overcrowding and slum conditions. The most congested part of the city, a central area of about a thousand acres comprising the bulk of the municipal 'B' and 'C' wards, showed an actual rise in population density from 467 to 483 persons per acre between 1901 and 1911.⁷⁷ Plague remained a constant menace, periodic outbreaks exacting a

⁷³BC, 17 Feb.1915.

⁷⁴A similar logic dictated the construction of Sandhurst Road, opened in 1909: it provided an opening further north in the inner city for movement towards the west of the island. Interestingly, by 1914, there were claims that Europeans were being virtually driven out of Cumballa Hill and Malabar Hill by Parsi and Hindu merchants. *Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, 1914, p. 233.

⁷⁵These and other innovative residential estates on Lamington Road and the new Hughes Road primarily attracted well-to-do Parsis from North Fort. This largely accounted for the 23 percent decrease in the population of North Fort between 1891 and 1911. Orr, *Density of Population...*, p. 7.

⁷⁶Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 161.

⁷⁷Calculated on the basis of statistics provided by the 1931 *CI*, 1931, vol. ix, p. 10.

high death toll,⁷⁸ while there was no abatement in the familiar diseases of malaria and smallpox.⁷⁹

The Improvement Trust blamed the Municipal Corporation's failure to amend its building by-laws in favour of a uniform sanitary code,⁸⁰ and with its costs rising, complained increasingly of the inadequate basis of its subsidy from the Bombay government;⁸¹ the Corporation in turn accused the Trust of overspending on roads to the detriment of direct slum improvement;⁸² it also claimed that it had no sanitary jurisdiction over the vast tracts of government and railway land; not to be outdone, the Bombay government was scathing about the Corporation's apathy, nor was it even averse to blaming the Trust for displacing 'considerable numbers of the poorer classes' and not providing them with alternative sanitary dwellings!

Such bitter mutual recriminations on the part of the colonial agencies reveals the consistently high level of institutional frustration at the failure to reverse the process of urban environmental degeneration. However, this never extended to a questioning of the dominant culture of *laissez-faire* whose individualistic norms precluded a coordinated, consensual approach to urban development as well as the prioritizing of collective, civic needs in renewal schemes. This meant that the processes of production

⁷⁸'Since it broke out in 1896 it has always been with us', stated the 1911 Census, observing that plague accounted for 114,506 deaths in the decade 1900-1910. *CI*, 1911, vol. viii, part 1, p. 9.

⁷⁹*BG*, 24 Feb. 1905 and 18 March 1909.

⁸⁰*BITR* 1913, pp. 123-24; and 1915, p. 109.

⁸¹*ibid.*, (1913), p. 147; also 1916, p. 102. The Trust's repeated representations led the Bombay government, in turn, to attempt to solicit an extra annual grant of around Rs. 4.5 lakhs from the Government of India in 1913. The GOI refused, arguing that any additional funds should be sought from the considerable 'untapped local resources' at the disposal of the Municipal Corporation. The Bombay government responded by pointing out that urban development schemes currently envisaged rendered imperative the municipality's holding back of 'an adequate reserve of taxation' and suggested instead that the additional funds be drawn from a surtax on transfers of land and house property in Bombay city. The GOI finally gave its assent and the Bombay government, to the great dismay of the Municipal Corporation, went as far as preparing a Bill for legislation. New war-time colonial priorities, however, led to the Bill being withdrawn in 1916. *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1913, pp. 551-53; and 1916, pp. 963-64. *BITR* 1916, p. 102.

⁸²Letter from President, Bombay Municipal Corporation, to Secretary, GOB General Department, 29 July 1915; *BITR* 1916, p. 98.

and renewal of social space would remain driven by the profit and prestige motives of the dominant classes. Moreover, the fixed and finite nature of urban land as a wealth-generating resource ensured that these processes would also continue to be destructively competitive.

Thus the one and only Bombay government pre-war urban policy initiative, its 1909 Resolution on the 'Development of Bombay City', was primarily concerned with increasing the social space 'available for occupation by the wealthy classes'.⁸³ Since the environmental blight caused by the municipal sewage pumping station at Love Grove, just north of Mahaluxshmi, precluded the northerly expansion of upper class settlements along the western shore, it advocated another reclamation scheme in Back Bay, purely for elite residential purposes. Moreover, in its desire to maintain the traditional pattern of landuse in which residence and workplace were in close spatial proximity, and which would ensure the continuing residential separation of social classes, the local colonial state appeared to have forgotten all about the fundamental problem of congestion.

The 'well-to-do' residents of Bombay, the Resolution declared, should continue to be housed in the west and south-west of the city, 'as near the Fort as houses at suitable rents are available'. Similarly, mill workers and labourers would need to reside close to factories and docks, in the centre and east, as long as hours of work and wages did not 'permit their travelling any distance' from their workplace. Although the document advocated the immediate 'erection of a large number of chawls for the accomodation of the poorer classes', no specific, practical measures were suggested. Only the 'middle class worker', who could afford the cost of public transit, could be persuaded to move to the suburban north-west and eventually, to the still largely undevelopped island of Salsette beyond the existing city boundaries. Such spatial segregation had to be

⁸³The following paragraphs are based on Bombay Government/General Department Resolution no. 3022, 14 June 1909: Development of Bombay City and the improvement of communications in the Island. *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings*, 1909, pp. 381-386.

maintained 'otherwise the interests of one class will suffer by the intrusion, into areas unsuitable for them, of residents of another'.⁸⁴

With the constant increase in the working-class population during this period, this was a recipe for exacerbating congestion in the already densely populated central districts: it necessarily implied the multiplication of built structures over a finite land surface area. Indeed, such conditions were at the heart of the unsustainable urban environment which had spawned disease and death, and threatened Bombay with economic catastrophe. Nor were the colonial authorities unaware of the new technological factor of the electrified railway or of social initiatives such as cheap workers' trains which, between them, were widely perceived as the potential answer to the limited availability of land in European inner cities.⁸⁵ Prior to the 1909 Resolution, the Bombay government's own consultation document, circulated in 1907 to the city's 'important representative bodies', had referred to the possibilities of 'free and rapid communication by rail and tramway' as well as of 'cheap workmen's trains or workmen's tramways' which would enable working-class accommodation 'in the less frequented portions of the Island where land is available on easy terms'.

The Resolution of 1909, however, decisively rejected these ideas, describing as 'premature' any 'scheme for an electric railway for the conveyance of suburban passenger traffic'. Only with the establishment of the projected upper class residential area in Colaba would railway electrification become, 'in course of time', a realistic option. Currently, an electric railway line could only be justified 'within Port Trust limits' so as to provide rapid 'access to the trade centres' now emerging along the north-east foreshore. Other possibilities of rapid transit such as overhead trackless trolleys and underground railways were similarly dismissed as 'beyond the scope of the immediate requirements of the Island'. The prospect of subsidised transport for

⁸⁴GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings*, 1909, p. 72.

⁸⁵Paolo Capuzzo, *Between Politics and Technology: transportation as a factor of mass suburbanization in Europe 1890-1939*, p. 1. Paper presented at a conference on "Suburbanising the masses: Public transport and urban development in historical perspective", National Railway Museum, York, UK, November 1997.

workers, an increasingly important aspect of industrial policy in several European cities, also fell by the wayside since there was 'practically a consensus of opinion on the part of all the bodies consulted' that no such special measures were necessary.

However, while electrification was rejected and only anticipated as a distant prospect, the threat to the development of station and terminal accommodation for the BB&CI Railway in the south of the city was now lifted. With the Railway Board itself averse to immediate electrification, the Bombay government's policy directive represented a victory for the railways over the tramways as the previously suggested removal of stations south of Grant Road would have meant an expanded service of electric trams. On Grant Road itself, sixty-three plots of land were compulsorily acquired by the government of India on behalf of the BB&CI Railway for the building of a long-distance terminal station. In the absence of any process of public consultation, at least one thousand five hundred families were reportedly evicted from their homes.⁸⁶

At the same time, the local colonial state, again oblivious of spatial impact, also advocated the expansion of road communications to be provided by the building of 'an eastern, a central and a western trunk line of roadway'. The implications for the narrow, already congested central and southern portions of the city appeared ominous.

Finally, the Resolution mentioned the impending introduction of 'a Town Planning Act' for the entire Bombay Presidency which would, as 'in England and Germany', regulate the sanitary development of future building operations. This would include *the alignment of streets to be constructed at some future date..the necessity of building in conformity with the alignment, the bringing of sites to a certain level, the erection of houses of a suitable type and harmonious architectural design, and the limitation of the area actually occupied by buildings to a certain proportion of the whole site area.*

These regulations were essentially to be applicable to the island of Salsette beyond the existing northern city limits, the subject of a separate 'development report'. The

⁸⁶BC, 3 Aug.1920; *Praja Mitra & Parsi*, 4 Aug. 1920; *BNNR* no. 32, 1920.

Bombay government appeared to detect the beginnings of a 'middle-class' migratory pattern away from the congested inner city towards Salsette, which it attributed to '..the amenities of the climate and the comparative cheapness of living'. It declared itself anxious to use town planning methods to develop Salsette lands for building purposes so as to ensure that settlement would proceed according to 'a well ordered plan'. Somewhat contradicting its views on transport in the Bombay City Resolution, the local colonial state declared itself, finally, in favour of the provision of 'easy means of communication' between the city and the new suburbs.⁸⁷

The Bombay government's failure to conceive of "suburbanisation" in terms of the urgent decentralisation of congested inner city settlements, possible only through the development of rapid transit, revealed the incoherence of its approach to planning. There was no conception of the city as an integrated social space requiring forms of public intervention in the interests of all citizens. Suburbanisation was viewed in terms, not of the spatial and residential needs of an ever growing majority of urban wage-earners, but purely in relation to the select numbers who, it was thought, could afford to move under existing market conditions. In its inability to see beyond a Bombay socially and spatially fragmented by different and unequal class interests, the local colonial state continued to advocate a hierarchical pattern of development focused around the needs and aspirations of the affluent south. In this perspective, the poorer classes would continue to be confined to their existing neighbourhoods, a recipe for escalating urban congestion and aggravating environmental blight.

There was indeed a glaring contradiction between the Resolution's professed objective of formulating 'a policy which shall govern the development of the Island for the next twenty years' and its rejection of the possibilities of cheap and rapid public transport as being 'beyond the scope' of immediate necessity. This negated a core principle of planning: the forecasting of various processes of urban growth upon which the formulation of town extension plans and the development of new suburbs

⁸⁷*GOB Public Works Proceedings*, 1909, pp. 661, 735, 789.

necessarily rested. The local colonial state could not think in any such visionary terms as it still perceived Bombay fundamentally as a “transactional space”--as the exit-point and facilitator of commercial ventures dedicated to taking resources out of India. This precluded any substantial public expenditure on the development and maintenance of an evolving urban living environment; it also ensured that the Bombay government remained bound to a host of particularistic and competing economic actors, each of whom was equally committed to the immediacy of its perceived interests.

As a result, the local colonial state’s directives represented little more than an attempted balancing act between various competing capitalist forces. This ensured that urban policy remained caught up in the time-warp of the early industrial era rather than offering new perspectives on urban renewal in the light of contemporary movements towards ‘city planning’ guided by the new visions of the modern era. It was a blueprint that seemed to offer Bombay and its citizens a future remarkably similar to their past.

3. The politics of built forms: high design, sick buildings, and the elusiveness of town planning.

The substantial expansion in built forms is a significant and revealing aspect of the city's history during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In spite of the considerable demolition of built structures as a result of slum clearance and road building operations, the number of buildings in Bombay rose from 38,454 in 1901 to 52,334 in 1921.⁸⁸ Building, construction, and reclamation sites characterized a changing and expanding urban landscape which, by the late 1920s, was barely recognizable from the nineteenth century "town and island".

Buildings classified as 'residential' easily comprised the most important category, numbering 34,808. However, they showed only a very modest eleven percent increase since the turn of the century, a probable indication of the effects of "improvement" schemes on this category of buildings. Significantly too, the density of buildings closely corresponded with the density of population. The most overcrowded parts of the city, comprising the central sections of 'B', 'C', and 'E' municipal wards--Chakla, Bhuleshwar, Kumbharwada, Kamatipura, and Second Nagpada--also experienced the most intense pressure of buildings on the land: over fifteen buildings per acre. This pressure was, moreover, heightened by the 'modern tendency' to construct large residential blocks in preference to small buildings.⁸⁹ Indeed, congestion and its attendant environmental problems were due less to population density *per se* than to the ever growing spatial extension of insanitary buildings.

In contrast to the relative stagnation of residential space, the increased rate of production of industrial and commercial space was certainly impressive. Mills, factories, and industrial workshops increased by 328 percent, from 467 in 1901 to 1,530 in 1921; there was an even higher rate of growth of over 400 percent in the case of *godowns* (warehouses) used by commercial enterprises, railways, tramways, and

⁸⁸*CI*, 1921, vol. ix, part B, p. ii.

⁸⁹*ibid.*, pp. iv-vi.

docks. Indeed, the increase in this category of buildings was the single most important factor in the overall expansion of built structures during this period.⁹⁰

Moreover, while industrial premises tended to converge towards the north-east of the city outside the old Indian town, *godowns* remained tied to the traditional commercial districts in the centre of the city, contributing their share of growing building pressure on the land. New factories represented investments in the built environment for the purposes of increased industrial production and profit, while the multiplication of *godowns* reflected the continuing and growing accumulation of commercial wealth by *shetias* and Anglo-Indian companies. Between them, these built structures represented the most important repository of the dominant class's stored assets.

In addition to this growth in commercial premises, this was also the era that witnessed a considerable development in 'official' colonial public building. The General Post Office, the new Custom House, the JJ School of Art, the Prince of Wales Museum, the Royal Institute of Science, and the Gateway of India, were all built between 1905 and 1925.⁹¹ Between them, they represented a mix of functions which reveal the expanding ambitions of the local colonial state in this new era. For here were buildings designed to centralize and speed up communications, to reinforce economic control, to socialize citizens in the established canons of Western culture, and to provide an authoritative interpretation of the Indian past. This process significantly reached its apotheosis in a monument glorifying British conquest of Western India and mastery over its cultural past.⁹²

But these buildings were also much more than their intended functions. They represented the most forceful attempt yet to harness the possibilities of new technological developments in order to produce massive architectural forms

⁹⁰*ibid.*, pp. vi-vii.

⁹¹Christopher W. London, *Edwardian Architects of Bombay: George Wittet and John Begg*, in *MARG* vol. XLVI no. 1 (Bombay 1994), pp. 37-52.

⁹²The Gateway of India was modelled on, and thus represented a mastery of, 16th century vernacular Gujarati architecture. London, p. 49.

consciously symbolizing modern colonial power and prestige. With the exception of the JJ School, the sheer size and elevation of the new edifices achieved a dwarfing of human scale and a domination of the immediate spatial environment, providing the city with new monumental landmarks. The 'unprecedented plasticity'⁹³ of reinforced concrete was used to cast the imposing domes of the General Post Office, the Prince of Wales Museum, and the Gateway of India while also providing the latter with its foundations. As the dome, together with the arch, was central to the evolving "Indo-Saracenic" style of colonial architecture, the engineering versatility of the new material seemed to offer Indo-Saracenic a rich future in Bombay.⁹⁴

That this never quite happened was largely the result of the Bombay government's, and its Consulting Architect, George Wittet's, marked preference for European classical forms. These were used in the vast majority of the ninety-five public building projects which Wittet undertook until his death in 1926. However much Indo-Saracenic may be (correctly) open to colonial hegemonic readings,⁹⁵ its cultural eclecticism and visual reclaiming of Mughal styles was attracting the interest of a first generation of nationalistically-oriented architectural critics seeking to revitalize indigeneous forms. The Prince of Wales Museum, in particular, with its 'protruding balconies, mini-domes, Jain-style interior columns, marble inlaid floors reminiscent of Mughal palaces, and a dome highlighted with red sandstone squinches'⁹⁶ was widely perceived as

⁹³Colin Chant, *Materials: Steel and Concrete*, in Colin Chant (ed.), *Science, Technology and Everyday Life* (London 1989), p. 155.

⁹⁴A late 19th century movement in colonial architecture, Indo-Saracenic represented a self-conscious attempt to design official buildings which reflected their Indian environment. Working under the patronage of the Maharaja of Jaipur, its leading theoretical exponent, Swinton Jacob, produced the "Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details" in 1890. The Portfolio presented a flexibly arranged framework of vernacular architectural forms, particularly Islamic motifs, that could, in any particular combination, be chosen to shape modern buildings. Dwivedi & Mehrotra, pp. 198-99. See also Giles H. R Tillotson, *Orientalizing The Raj: Indo-Saracenic Fantasies*, in *MARG*, vol. XLVI (Bombay 1994), pp. 15-34.

⁹⁵See Metcalf, *Ideologies..*, p. 158.

⁹⁶London, p. 44.

evidence of the possibilities of a vernacular architectural revival.⁹⁷ In this context, the colonial state's hasty retreat back to the classical may be seen as an attempt to halt the development of a style whose ultimate destination it now felt was beyond its control.

Whatever the style of architecture used, the new public buildings were expressions of colonial high design which contributed to the modernist renewal of the Fort. Alongside the Bombay government, it was significant that the Improvement Trust too came to play a crucial part in this process. On the Fort's main artery, Hornby Road, the Trust developed the first unified arcaded commercial premises, adding a novel component to the redesigning of the city's dominant social space.⁹⁸ These premises, and the rooms constructed above the arcade, brought the Trust substantial rental returns.⁹⁹ Arcades also provided citizens with a new spatial experience, as the following advertisement by "Whiteaways", one of the main Department Stores to emerge from the Hornby Road development, suggests: 'During this week see The Arcade windows. Every one of our immense windows reflects the season's styles..There is a huge window devoted to the clothing needs of men in khaki...The Arcade is a cool promenade by day and a blaze of light and life till 8 p.m at night'.¹⁰⁰

At the same time, the new medium of cinema was emerging from early exhibitions in tents and in the open air and acquiring its own specially designed buildings. Predictably, cinema edifices in the city were pioneered in the Fort where initially, spatial constraints made it easier to renovate and reconvert old theatres. The *Empire*, which opened in 1916, was rebuilt 'out of all recognition' to its previous incarnation, in a 'cream and gold colour scheme' and now equipped 'with a balcony and a lounge with

⁹⁷From around 1920, emerging bodies such as the Bombay Architectural Students' Association were making representations to the Development Department, the Municipal Corporation, the Improvement Trust, and the Port Trust, using this and other few examples to urge the adoption of Indian styles for new buildings 'especially in new areas still to be developed or old ones to be rebuilt'. Only the Improvement Trust responded, somewhat belatedly organising, in 1923, a design competition for 'facades of buildings in Indian style'. However, in spite of the excellent response, the designs were never used. *BC*, 7 Nov. 1921; *BITR* 1923, p. 33.

⁹⁸Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 172.

⁹⁹*GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings*, 1922, p. 207.

¹⁰⁰*BC*, 2 Oct. 1915.

tea rooms on the first floor'. Its main entrance was on Bori Bunder, with another access on Hornby Road convenient for tram stops 'from every part of the city'.¹⁰¹

Cinema initially attracted a number of predominantly Parsi entrepreneurs who were already active in a range of modern commercial enterprises. The most eminent, J.F. Madan,¹⁰² chose to locate two of his most prestigious cinemas, the *Imperial* and the *Empress*, in 'new Girgaum', on land leased from the Improvement Trust on Lamington Road. Just off the new Sandhurst Road, Lamington Road was at the heart of one of the Trust's most valuable inner city real estate development zones and included new elite residential plots. The high rental returns of this location, Madan's expanding cinema empire,¹⁰³ and the growing commercial potential of moving pictures, made this a highly remunerative business venture for the Trust.¹⁰⁴

The design of the *Imperial* reflected the early European predilection for 'baroque' in cinema architecture, with the auditorium as the centrepiece. The *Times of India* described the opening of this cinema as '..one of the big events in the moving picture history of Bombay..anybody passing down this splendid broad thoroughfare will be able to see a long new building standing back in a spacious garden, with a covered way leading from the front gate to the entrance.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹BC, 2 Dec. 1916.

¹⁰²In addition to his cinema interests, Madan was also an importer of foods, pharmaceutical products and liquors, and also dealt in real estate and insurance. Erik Barnouw & S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (Delhi 1980), p. 8. Rustomji Dorabji, proprietor of the Wellington, West End and Venus cinemas, was also a motor-car dealer, owning the Wellington Motor & Cycle Works in the Fort. *Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-28. Evidence*, vol. I, p. 348.

¹⁰³By 1927, Madan Theatres owned 8 out of the 18 cinemas in the city. *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴After 1909, the need to maximize revenue led to the Trust letting out its vacant lands 'at the best rent obtainable' to temporary users for periods ranging from a month to 8 years. The longer periods, the Chairman stated, were for commercial enterprises which had invested considerable capital on buildings such as godowns and cinemas. These, he added, yielded 'very good rents in particular localities, especially where the Trust have constructed new or improved old roads'. Indeed, 'in many plots, the temporary revenue yields an even better return on the Trust's capital outlay than the permanent revenue.' J. P. Orr, *Social Reform..*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁵TOI, 5 April 1917.

The correspondent of the *Bombay Chronicle* was equally if not more impressed by the *Empress*, which opened its doors in 1919:

*Externally, one has visions of white colonnades and tasteful palm gardens in the making, and internally the decorations in gold and white give a sense of coolness and comfort which is accentuated by the breeze created by 50 fans..The Empress will be one of the few theatres in Bombay which will have a fixed screen and this will ensure absolute steadiness in the pictures. The very latest Pathe cinema apparatus has been introduced, enclosed in a chamber which is guaranteed to be fireproof. Great consideration has been given to fire precautions and there are no fewer than 12 exits.*¹⁰⁶

Cinemas in the Fort and Girgaum catered predominantly, though not exclusively, to upper class Europeans and Indians. At the select *Excelsior* and *Empire* cinemas in the Fort which only showed 'high class European society dramas', the composition of audiences was described as 'Illiterate 10 percent, Semi-literate 30 percent, Educated 60 percent. Males 60 percent, Females 25 percent, Boys 15 percent. Europeans 30 percent, Parsis 40 percent, Hindus 20 percent, Others 10 percent'.¹⁰⁷ These audiences experienced not only the new medium of the moving image in its early silent mode, but the charms of conceptually original buildings, well-lit, lively, and providing unprecedented amenities and comforts.¹⁰⁸

In contrast, the cheaper cinemas in the centre and north of the city catered for the rapidly growing working-class movie audiences. By the mid-1920s, workers had indeed overtaken 'educated Indians' as the predominant urban cinema audience.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶BC, 10 Sept. 1919.

¹⁰⁷*Indian Cinematograph Committee*, p. 548. Indeed, both cinemas offered a wide-ranging variety of admission prices. In 1925, these were: Box for 4 (Rs. 12-10 annas); Sofa for 3 (Rs. 10); Orchestra stalls (Rs. 2-8 annas); Dress Circle (Rs. 2-8 annas); Stalls (Rs. 1-4 annas); Family Circle (Rs. 1-4 annas); Pit Stalls (12 annas); Gallery (4 annas). *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁰⁸The Royal Opera House, which began showing films in 1917, was refurbished so as to provide each floor with its own refreshment room and a promenade space during intervals. Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 211.

¹⁰⁹Two-thirds of all cinema-goers were now described as belonging to 'the illiterate classes'. *Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-28: Evidence*, vol. 1, p. 1.

Unlike the *Imperial* and the *Empress*, however, entrepreneurs built cinemas such as the *Venus* and the *Lakshmi*, close to Parel's mill district, as 'unpretentious constructions' devoid of the architectural qualities and social amenities of the picture palaces of south Bombay.¹¹⁰ There were frequent complaints about the cinemas on Falkland Road and Grant Road in particular: a combination of overcrowding, cigarette-smoking, low ceilings and narrow and insufficient emergency exits, made them liable to 'spontaneous combustion'; while their inadequate latrines and location in the immediate vicinity of milch cattle and horse stables, rendered them indistinguishable from their wider insanitary environment.¹¹¹

Modernity in building also led to the emergence of a new style of upper class housing in south Bombay. The traditional low-built bungalow was increasingly giving way to tall apartment blocks which, facilitated by the new technology of reinforced concrete, were now springing up in Cuffe Parade, Apollo Bunder, Malabar and Cumballa Hills.¹¹² This new mode of living in 'flats' represented a modern compromise between the lavish spatial arrangements of the bungalow and the sparse, multi-purpose 1-2 room residential accommodation of the vast majority of citizens. It introduced an innovatively compact living space, delineated for the first time into the standardised functions of 'living room', 'bedroom', 'bathroom', and 'kitchen.' The new apartments were fitted with electric lights, fans, and the modern water-carriage system of sanitation.¹¹³

The *Times of India*, consistent guardian of traditional colonial high culture, bemoaned the gradual disappearance of the 'cool, comfortable, and roomy' bungalow and the city's increasing subjection to 'the tyranny of the flat';¹¹⁴ while the 1921 Census observed that 'the Flat is now such an important institution that at the next

¹¹⁰ibid., Report, p. 19.

¹¹¹Newspapers received constant letters of complaint calling for municipal intervention to enforce sanitary conveniences and safety measures on cinema proprietors. *TOI*, 6 June 1919; *BC*, 4 Nov. 1924.

¹¹²Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 225.

¹¹³*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, p. 78; *BMCR* 1916-17, p. xiv.

¹¹⁴*The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 23 June 1920.

Census it may be well to make the distinction (from other residential buildings) from the outset..'¹¹⁵ Indeed, by this time, 'real homes' in the shape of whole houses were described as having become 'very rare' in the old city.¹¹⁶

More elaborate, old-style dwellings now tended to be built in the would-be northern suburbs by (or more accurately for) those owning the new motor cars. The industrialist Jamsetji Tata single-handedly attempted to kick-start the suburban development of Salsette where he had acquired considerable land by commissioning George Wittet to construct a hundred one-storey bungalows in the traditional "Queen Anne" style in Bandra.¹¹⁷ On Matunga Road, near Wadala village, Shri Ranchodlalji Maharaj, head priest of the Vaishnav Hindu community, had a large two-storey bungalow built including servants' quarters, outhouses, and stables. The substantial compound was laid out as a garden adorned with fruit-bearing trees. The front porch was designed in Hindu-style temple architecture which was alone estimated to have cost ten thousand rupees to build. Shri Ranchodlalji only resided here two or three months during the year, living the rest of the time in his Bhuleshwar residence.¹¹⁸

In stark contrast, this was an era of acute crisis in the provision of working-class accommodation. As we have seen, in the years preceding the First World War, the housing needs of the labouring classes, and more generally, the urban poor, were not high on the colonial urban development agenda. Moreover, although other options were now possible, official thinking remained dominated by the shibboleth of maintaining workers' residential proximity to their workplace. Many of these residential areas were within the already highly congested central inner city localities and the target of the Improvement Trust's renewal schemes. The net effect of these schemes was to reduce

¹¹⁵ *CI*, 1921, part B, p. v.

¹¹⁶ Orr, *Social Reform*., p. 17.

¹¹⁷ King, *The Bungalow*., p. 57; Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 206. By 1919, Bandra was described as having become '...a permanent residential suburb for the better classes of Europeans, Parsis, and Muslims' due to its closeness to Bombay as well as to its 'salubrious climate and detached bungalows'. Even here, however, increasing demand for houses was now tempting landlords to 'build indiscriminately'. *TOI*, 2 July 1919.

¹¹⁸ *BITR* 1918, p. 90.

both the actual and potential housing space within the inner city for an ever increasing population, while at the same time raising the value of central urban land and consequently, rents.¹¹⁹

After a decade of ineffective and costly slum clearance operations, the Trust modified its policy, slowing down the process of building demolition and dishousing while attempting to rehouse displaced tenants in new chawls. Between 1909 and 1918, the Trust demolished 7,823 and constructed 9,311 one-room tenements on its estates.¹²⁰ These were never meant to satisfy the quantitative needs of the labouring population but merely to provide qualitative housing models ‘..by way of encouragement to private enterprise..to take on the work’ after the Trust had made a start.¹²¹ Incorporating some of the principles of modern sanitary housing, the new tenements rapidly came to be seen as the “cream” of one-room housing accommodation in Bombay. The new concrete buildings at Nagpada, for instance, were spatially arranged so as to include paved and drained interior courtyards both as open spaces and crucial sources of internal ventilation for the residential blocks.¹²²

However, very few mill hands, construction labourers, or dockers were able to afford the ‘self-supporting’ average monthly rent of between Rs.3.50-5.00 per room in Trust chawls.¹²³ By 1914, the average monthly wage of the labouring population was between Rs.15-20, with over seventy-five percent of industrial workers owing average debts of Rs.104 to money-lenders.¹²⁴ The Chairman of the Trust himself admitted that ‘so far as mere housing is concerned, there will be more of the middle class accommodated on the Trust estates at present than of the poorer classes’. He conceded

¹¹⁹In the two decades between 1898, the year of the Trust’s creation, and 1918, properties and rents in south and central Bombay were estimated to have gone up by 100-200 percent. *TOI*, 18 April 1919.

¹²⁰Orr, *Social Reform..*, p. 27.

¹²¹*ibid.*, p. 6.

¹²²Dwivedi & Mehrotra, p. 159.

¹²³*BITR* 1920, p. 28.

¹²⁴*BC*, 12 May 1916. Workers’ difficulties in meeting daily living expenses were compounded by the standard practice, amongst millowners, of keeping wages in arrears for 6-8 weeks. *BC*, 15 May 1917.

that the Nagpada estates had 'become inhabited by the lower middle and middle classes', while the Sandhurst Road chawls, like the ones on Princess Street earlier, provided accomodation for those 'who could afford to pay high rents for shops..'. Similarly, there were 'no poorer classes' on the Lamington Road estates.¹²⁵ Even the new chawls at Soparibaug, at the heart of the cotton mill district, found few takers amongst local mill hands at the monthly rent of Rs.3.75 per room.¹²⁶

The 1931 Census confirmed that '.. lower middle class people (ie clerks employed in government, municipal, or commercial service) are in many instances occupying accomodation meant to provide better one-room accomodation for the working-classes.'¹²⁷ This was indeed a telling expression of both housing scarcity, and of the low-wage structure of the city's economy: on the eve of the war, the vast majority of clerks earned between Rs. 20-30, only slightly above the average working-class wage. It provides further evidence of the extreme nature of urban class inequality, offering a glimpse of the extent to which the high income privileges of the ruling colonial bureaucracy were maintained at the expense of a mass of poorly paid employees.

Meanwhile, private enterprise showed little interest in taking up the Trust's invitation. A chronically low-waged labouring population simply did not provide the basis for profitable investments in new house building, especially in view of the higher capital costs of sanitary design and construction. Indeed, the few private owners of large stretches of building land now tended to hold on to their properties in anticipation of a continuing rise in land values, thus keeping the most amenable building sites off the market.¹²⁸ Instead, the virtually universal response to the rising popular demand for accomodation was for landlords to extend their old chawls upwards and outwards,

¹²⁵Oral evidence by J. P Orr, Chairman, Bombay Improvement Trust, to the Bombay Development Committee. *Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, pp. 287-88.

¹²⁶Conlon, *Industrialization..*, p. 163.

¹²⁷*CI*, 1931. Vol. ix, p. 102.

¹²⁸*BITR* 1919, p. 123.

thus aggravating the insanitary phenomenon of 'sweating building sites'.¹²⁹ This also enabled them to continue to operate outside the regulations of the new municipal building code of 1919 which only applied to 'new buildings to be constructed on land previously unbuilt upon'.¹³⁰

In localities such as Kamatipura, Second Nagpada, Byculla, and Parel,¹³¹ it was now common to find a continuous area of chawl buildings 'each occupying practically the whole area' of its site and backing on to one another, with only a dark, narrow 3-4' gully in between. In the absence of a proper drainage system, these gullies were effectively open drains, filled with domestic waste water and refuse. The small size and low ceiling of the dwelling rooms forestalled any proper supply of light and air, a situation made worse by many landlords' increasing tendency to sub-divide rooms. The tenements' small windows, the only source of cross ventilation, could not be opened because of the foul smell emanating from the gullies. At the same time, the addition of fourth and fifth storeys to many buildings further worsened light and ventilation conditions both internally, especially on ground floors, and in neighbouring tenements.¹³²

Extensions to insanitary buildings simply brought in more people on to the same residential site, worsening the state of the gullies and aggravating the poor circulation of air. With more tenants--overwhelmingly poor and ill-fed--having to breathe a reduced supply of air as a result of the buildings' occupation of a larger proportion of cubic air space, an increased susceptibility to air-borne diseases became an inevitable consequence of living in sick buildings. Byculla had an 'unduly high death-rate' caused by 'diseases of the respiratory system', while Tarwadi was described as having a 'high

¹²⁹Indeed, this was especially marked in "represented" areas, ie the most congested central urban localities. *BITR* 1913, p. 123; J. P Orr, *The need for co-operation between neighbours in the development of building estates* (Bombay 1915), p. 1.

¹³⁰*GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1919, p. 785.

¹³¹These were among the 13 of the 32 sections of the city in which 80 percent or more of the population lived in 1-room tenements. *CI*, 1931, vol. ix, p. 89.

¹³²Orr, *The need for co-operation...*, p. 2; *Density of Population...*, p. 13.

tuberculosis death-rate'.¹³³ Even in the epidemic year 1919, with cholera and influenza exacting a heavy death-toll amongst the labouring population, respiratory diseases still easily accounted for the highest proportion of fatalities, contributing over one-third of the total number of deaths in the city.¹³⁴

In addition, such buildings often had a devastating impact on the local physical environment. Overcrowding and poor drainage increased the volume of sullage water spilling directly into the soil from buildings. In Kamatipura, where there was virtually no paved and drained open spaces around buildings,¹³⁵ the sub-soil was now said to be so 'irreclaimably contaminated', that the entire section, it was suggested, be left free of human habitation for a number of years and converted into a park.¹³⁶ Such an environment was indeed hardly conducive to sustaining human life. While the infant mortality rate in the city during the decade 1913-23 averaged 475 per 1000 births, this figure rose to over 800 in Kamatipura.¹³⁷

On the eve of the First World War, the City of Bombay Improvement Act was amended so as to enable the Trust to build chawls for and at the expense of millowners. These would involve no 'loss to the public purse' and would be erected in the industrial zone just north of the congested central inner city.¹³⁸ Once again, however, the response from industrialists was far from enthusiastic. Only one firm, the Spring Mills Co., successfully negotiated a housing scheme for its workers with the Trust, and

¹³³*ibid.*, p. 14.

¹³⁴Of the 68, 610 deaths recorded in 1919, 24, 055 were due to respiratory diseases, 8, 455 to cholera, 7, 566 to fevers and influenza, 4, 457 to diarrhoea and dysentery, 2, 955 to diseases of the nervous system, and 2, 780 to tuberculosis. *BMCR* 1919-20, pp. xii-xiii.

¹³⁵*BITR* 1913, p. 126.

¹³⁶Orr, *Density of Population...*, pp. 13-14.

¹³⁷*Report of the Executive Health Officer for the year 1923* in *BMCR* 1923-24, part B, p. 1. The *Gujarati* lamented the impossibility of mothers' providing '..pure milk and healthy surroundings to their offsprings when they themselves breathe the atmosphere tainted by stench from sewers'. *Gujarati*, 15 Feb. 1920; *BNNR* no. 8, 1920. The average infant mortality figure in the city was still four times higher than Glasgow's 123, which was the worst of any metropolitan British city during this period and regarded as unacceptable. See R. A. Cage, *Infant Mortality Rates and Housing: Twentieth Century Glasgow*, in *Scottish Economic & Social History* 14 (1994), p. 80.

¹³⁸*BITR* 1918, p. 118.

chawls containing five hundred and four rooms were completed during the war years.¹³⁹

The Trust, however, decided to continue to use the imported construction materials of cement and steel which were now both in shorter supply and more expensive as a result of war conditions.¹⁴⁰ As a result, it found that the new housing could only be made 'self-supporting' at a monthly rent of Rs.5.35 per room and admitted for the first time that 'chawls cannot be built to pay except at rents which the poor cannot afford'.¹⁴¹ Higher building costs also easily dissuaded the few millowners who had expressed interest, from pursuing housing schemes with the Trust.¹⁴²

Such a situation was the logical outcome of the misguided and self-defeating attempts to force workers to bear the brunt of the economic costs of their housing. The net result was simply to price them out of virtually all new "working class" housing development schemes and to throw them back on to the mercy of rack-renting landlords and to even worse living conditions than those that had led to the creation of the Improvement Trust in the first place. Over the next decade, the Trust, in spite of its declared intentions, effectively ceased to build any accommodation that had a realistic chance of being occupied by mill-hands or labourers. Its house-building efforts were now largely spent on addressing the colonial priority of securing self-contained accommodation for the city's police force.¹⁴³ Industrial projects such as the "Kohinoor Mill Chawls" and the "Dadar Workmen's Cottages" in the early 1920s consisted of 2-

¹³⁹*BITR* 1919, p. 28.

¹⁴⁰*Bombay Presidency Administrative Reports* 1917-18, pp. 57-58; and 1918-19, pp. 37-38.

¹⁴¹*BITR* 1919, p. 28.

¹⁴²*BITR* 1917, p. 11.

¹⁴³*Annual Reports of the Bombay City Police* 1917, p. 13; and 1918, p. 13; *BITR* 1917, p. 11; and 1922, p. 18. In September 1919, the Bombay government made urgent representations to the Indian Munitions Board for the supply of cement from the UK required for the construction of police accommodation schemes. The Board, however, replied that owing to the 'prevailing cement position in Britain', it could only arrange for the supply of 1000 of the 2550 tons requested. *GOB Judicial Proceedings*, September-December 1919, p. 1903.

3 room tenements designed to house 'superior grade clerks and upper subordinates' employed by the mills.¹⁴⁴

By the end of the war years, 'house famine', affecting particularly the working classes, was seen as Bombay's most acute social problem.¹⁴⁵ 'The greatest and most urgent task to which Bombay must devote itself now and for years to come', stated the *Bombay Chronicle*, 'is to build houses--to build, to build, and to build well and with foresight.' The paper went on to suggest that local authorities should attempt to emulate the London County Council's ambitious post-war popular housing programme.¹⁴⁶ In Britain, the end of the war had brought the first national subsidised housing scheme under the Housing Act of 1919. As a result, London and other metropolitan local authorities embarked upon the building of suburban council houses which were let, at low rents, to wage-earners with dependant families. All the new homes were provided with indoor toilets, electric lighting, and running water.¹⁴⁷

With little response from private enterprise, and with the Improvement Trust now given specific responsibilities for northern suburban development, the Bombay government set up a new "Development Department" to take charge of the construction of 'at least 50,000 1-room tenements' which would finally solve the problem of working-class accomodation.¹⁴⁸ Like the Trust, the new government department was endowed with powers of compulsory land acquisition;¹⁴⁹ this was yet another authoritarian "quango" characterized by secretive deliberations and the complete absence of any public consultation procedures.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, in an era of

¹⁴⁴*BITR* 1921, p. 12; and 1922, p. 33.

¹⁴⁵The Bombay Central Labour Federation estimated in 1922 that at least 50,000 workers in the city were homeless and slept on pavements. *GOB Judicial Proceedings*, January-May 1922, p. 334.

¹⁴⁶*BC*, 30 June 1919. Interestingly, J. P Orr, chairman of the Improvement Trust during the war years, now moved on to the post of Director of Housing with the London County Council. *TOI*, 7 Nov. 1919.

¹⁴⁷Gordon Phillips, *The Social Impact*, in Stephen Constantine, Maurice W Kirby and Mary B Rose (eds), *The First World War in British History* (London 1995), p. 130.

¹⁴⁸*GOB Development Proceedings* 1921, p. 49.

¹⁴⁹*ibid.*, 1920, p. 46.

¹⁵⁰*BC*, 29 June 1920.

unprecedented boom in land values, and with the continuing rise in the price of construction materials, building costs were higher than ever. Funds for the scheme were to be provided by a new town cess of one rupee on every bale of raw cotton imported into the city from other parts of India.¹⁵¹ Once again, the Development Department was to operate on a strictly commercial basis: this meant the obligation to realise 'full market values' on land transactions and to impose 'self-supporting' chawl rents on workers. There were to be no subsidies.¹⁵²

Such dogged determination not to learn from the experience of the Improvement Trust in over two decades of housing schemes, meant that the Development Department's failure was even more ignominious, and at greater financial cost. When the first completed "DD Chawls" in Worli and Naigaum went on offer at the beginning of 1923 at monthly rents varying from Rs.13-17 per room, there were few takers. Significantly, the 'very small' numbers who took up tenancies consisted of 'clerks, superior artisans, and small shop-keepers', but no industrial workers.¹⁵³ Two years later, due to the increasingly heavy financial loss incurred by the government's disastrous Back Bay Reclamation Scheme,¹⁵⁴ the house-building programme was suspended indefinitely: only 207 chawls comprising 16,544 1-room tenements had been constructed. In May 1925, rents were reduced to Rs.7-10 per room, and a few months later, rooms were offered free of charge to postmen, telegraph messengers, and government peons.¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, at the start of 1926, only 65 of these blocks were partially occupied, with 80 percent of the tenements still vacant.¹⁵⁶

This high vacancy rate suggests other than purely economic causes. While mill hands and labourers on a monthly post-war wage of Rs.24-38 could clearly not afford the rents, the well-established process of lower middle class tenancy substitution did

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 1925, p. 105.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 1923, p. 67.

¹⁵⁴ See the Report of the Committee appointed by the GOI to enquire into the Back Bay Reclamation Scheme, 1926.

¹⁵⁵ *GOB Development Proceedings* 1925, pp. 67, 121.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 1926, p. 23.

not on this occasion materialise. The press had warned Lloyd that if the housing scheme was intended to be 'for the benefit of the people', provision for potential users' input into the planning process was indispensable.¹⁵⁷ As it turned out, bad design and poor amenities meant that once again, sick buildings had been produced, this time by a colonial agency 'out of touch with the life of the people for whom the buildings were intended'.¹⁵⁸ On the Worli estate, where the largest number of chawls had been constructed, rooms had no water connections, *nahanis* (washing places), or lighting, and only very inadequate *chulha* (fireplace for cooking purposes) provision; the number of latrines per floor was also insufficient. The chawls had also been designed without the customary verandah, which poor tenants had come to regard as their essential 'breathing space'. Rooms had thus no view of the sky and no perspective on the outside world.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, only one chimney flue per four rooms had been designed to cope with the smoke from several *chulhas*. As a result, tenants on third and fourth floors found their rooms filling up with smoke from the lower floor rooms. The Development Department's chief engineer admitted that this 'was a serious difficulty which had not been foreseen when the chawls were designed'. However, the provision of a separate flue for each room would be 'very costly' as it would entail a significant 'alteration in the design of the chawl'. The only alternative, he suggested, would be to allow the smoke to escape through the windows; yet even this was not possible: instead of proper open-and-shut glass windows, fixed metal nets already providing very inadequate ventilation covered the openings.¹⁶⁰

From the moment they appeared on the northern Bombay skyline, the new chawls were greeted with unanimous condemnation. The monotonous desolation of block after block of dark ferro-concrete tenements shocked even government officials. Professor

¹⁵⁷*Hindusthan*, 21 Aug. 1920; *BNNR* no. 35, 1920.

¹⁵⁸*BC*, 2 June 1925.

¹⁵⁹*BC*, 25 Oct. 1924.

¹⁶⁰*GOB Development Proceedings* 1923, pp. 209-10; *BC*, 10 May 1924.

Stanley Jevons, himself a government housing expert, condemned the 'unhealthy mechanical buildings' as a 'travesty of housing reform' which reflected 'the greatest discredit' on the Bombay government.¹⁶¹ The Archbishop of Bombay told the eminent architect Claude Batley that he feared the DD chawls would turn into 'centres of vice and crime' because 'there was no evidence of the milk of human kindness in their design'. The designer, who could hardly call himself an 'architect', had utterly failed to visualize the needs and aspirations of prospective residents.¹⁶²

The DD chawls, in fact, expressed in built form the continuing elite fear of the labouring and "dangerous" classes who were to be 'caged' or 'warehoused'¹⁶³ in the distant north-west, away from the city's central districts where the plague had arisen. They also testified to the destructive effects of a process of "development" which entirely neglected the material needs and aspirations of the majority of the population. In a scenario that was to be repeated countless times over the course of the twentieth century, "development" meant the displacement and dishousing of the poorest sections of society and a resettlement programme a full two decades after the original schemes that had caused the homelessness. Deprived of water, lighting, sanitation facilities, and civic amenities, the resettlement sites in turn proved to be little more than concrete jungles, designed merely to reproduce disease and high mortality rates.¹⁶⁴

A radically alternative urban development scenario was sketched out by the foremost prophet of early modern planning, Patrick Geddes, who arrived in Bombay in March 1915.¹⁶⁵ Geddes observed that in Bombay, as elsewhere in India, disease-obsessed local authorities and their engineers seemed to be engaged in 'destroying

¹⁶¹*BC*, 10 May 1924.

¹⁶²Claude Batley, *The Importance of City Planning*, in Clifford Manshardt (ed.), *Bombay Looks Ahead* (Bombay 1934), p. 36.

¹⁶³These were the terms used by contemporaries. *BC*, 12 June 1924.

¹⁶⁴In the House of Commons, Communist MP with Bombay antecedents, Shipurji Saklatvala, accused the Bombay government of intensifying the rate of infant mortality in the city by its persistence in building these one-room tenements. *Voice of India*, 25 June 1923. *BNR* no. 30, 1923.

¹⁶⁵The *Bombay Chronicle* described Geddes as a pioneer in 'perhaps the most vital and significant of all contemporary social movements in the West, ..the reconstruction of cities and the redemption of town life'. *BC*, 25 Aug. 1914.

much and constructing little'.¹⁶⁶ But urban planning was more than simply about new buildings and places: to be successful, it had to be concerned with creating social spaces where people could flourish.¹⁶⁷ The home, he pointed out, was both the essential determinant of the well-being of its inhabitants and the primary spatial unit of the city. Planning in Bombay thus needed to be designed to facilitate the supply of habitable homes, achievable through a judicious balance between constructing new houses and carefully renovating old ones.¹⁶⁸

This approach would, moreover, entail massive savings in the lavish sums spent on 'destroying the whole neighbourhood and rebuilding it with less room than before'.¹⁶⁹ He criticized elitist renewal schemes which prioritized roads over homes and seemed primarily concerned with 'immediate effect':

*..Here a street as fine as may be, there a monument as impressive as funds will allow, there again an avenue as extensive or a garden as magnificent as space permits...the result has been that in too many cities imposing new streets have been laid out without survey of their surrounding quarter and constructed without reference to local needs or potentialities.*¹⁷⁰

This was indeed a global urban problem. In the central districts of European and Indian cities alike, rents were rising, to the benefit of landlords. This was not due to 'a general economic process beyond explanation', but primarily 'the result of demolitions which made houses scarcer and dearer than before..'¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶BC, 25 March 1915. Geddes criticized the essential anti-plague strategy of selective slum demolition as 'counter-productive'. This merely resulted in people and rats alike crowding into other densely populated areas, with starving rats becoming increasingly susceptible to disease 'while the congested heaped-up human population becomes even less able than before to keep down the rats'. Cited in Jaqueline Tyrwhitt (ed.), *Patrick Geddes in India* (London 1947), p. 45.

¹⁶⁷Geddes used the term 'folk-planning' which he contrasted to 'mere place-planning'. Cited in Tyrwhitt, p. 22.

¹⁶⁸BC, 25 March 1915.

¹⁶⁹ibid.

¹⁷⁰Cit. in Tyrwhitt, p. 24.

¹⁷¹BC, 25 March 1915.

Geddes observed that it was perfectly possible to 'build a large number of decent homes with playgrounds without exceeding two storeys' if the residential town were expanded towards the north-west of the island. This, he observed, had been 'too long delayed'.¹⁷² Well-designed, low-built, low-density homes would ensure that houses were not only habitable but, unlike existing Bombay chawls, 'dignified and desirable'.¹⁷³ Moreover, the actual process of designing had to include 'the constructive powers of the people themselves'. It was likely that these designs would incorporate aspects of 'old-world village life' which constituted the 'vital secret' of the working-class urban neighbourhood. As a result, an 'urban village' residential plan including gardens and open spaces would emerge;¹⁷⁴ as in the villages, workers would be able to build their own homes using bricks and plaster at a fraction of the cost of official housing schemes constructed out of the modern materials of concrete and steel.

In an era which witnessed the emergence of international town planning movements, the Bombay government showed some interest in the new approach. At a discursive level, planning was placed on the governmental agenda via the well-trodden routes of resolutions, committee reports, and even the odd measure of legislation. The local colonial state followed up its 1909 Resolution by seconding local officials to study town-planning schemes in English and German cities.¹⁷⁵ The report on Germany, the acknowledged world leader in the design of cheap working-class housing, was particularly enthusiastic. At the same time, its emphasis on the extensive nature of German municipalities' powers and initiatives, particularly their strategic co-ordinating role and their policy of urban land acquisition for public purposes, exposed the political gulf separating the public vision of modern urbanism from the fragmented mode of

¹⁷²BC, 31 March 1915.

¹⁷³BC, 25 Aug. 1914.

¹⁷⁴Cit. in Tyrwhitt, pp. 88, 57.

¹⁷⁵GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1913, pp. 273, 345.

city administration presided over by a local colonial state primarily concerned with its own accumulative ventures.¹⁷⁶

The Bombay Town Planning Act of 1915 was an extremely limited measure, and did not reflect any new official awareness of the necessary concomitant transformations in the role and functions of local government. It theoretically gave municipalities powers of control over building operations which they had neither the mandate, nor the political will, nor the financial and human resources to make use of. Initially only applicable to the regions of suburban Salsette awaiting “development”, the Act essentially served as a means of enabling colonial agencies to bring suburban land suitable for building on to the market.¹⁷⁷ It did not mark a break with the piecemeal colonial approach to urban development and continued to envisage building operations which did not include, simultaneously, any provision for water-supply, drainage, sanitation, or transport.¹⁷⁸

The Act’s extension to Bombay city proper in 1919, at the request of the Municipal Corporation, was even more restricted in scope. It simply required private owners of building lands to submit for municipal approval plans showing the lay-out and plotting of the land to be built upon as well as the height and sanitary facilities of the buildings to be erected.¹⁷⁹ At the same time, the building by-laws were finally amended, though not in favour of a uniform code. The ‘sixty-three and a half degree rule’ for light and air was now adopted for all buildings to be constructed on land previously unbuilt upon. This provided for the design of open spaces around newly erected buildings equal to half their height;¹⁸⁰ however, developers in congested areas could still apply for ‘a standard of open space around buildings appreciably lower than that required by

¹⁷⁶B. W Kissan, *Report on Town-Planning Enactments in Germany* (Bombay 1913), pp. 20, 26-27.

¹⁷⁷A. E Mirams, *The Bombay Town Planning Act of 1915* (Bombay 1916), p. 14.

¹⁷⁸GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1919, p. 449.

¹⁷⁹*ibid.*, pp. 245-46.

¹⁸⁰Clifford Manshardt (ed.), *The Bombay Municipality at Work* (Bombay 1935), p. 58.

the sixty-three and a half degree rule..'¹⁸¹ The new regulations, moreover, did not apply to the Fort and Girgaum, or to government, railway, and military lands.

Town planning was thus not conceived as an active, co-ordinated process undertaken by a public authority in the interests of all citizens. Indeed, it was something of a euphemism, boiling down in effect to a wholly inadequate attempt to control the private use of building land in the city. The new measure was inapplicable to existing built-up sites and to the substantial tracts of land owned by the colonial authorities, and only partially applicable to congested areas. Moreover, responsibility for its implementation in relation to new buildings lay in the dubious hands of a Municipal Corporation controlled by landlords and only elected by Bombay's richest citizens--just one percent of the urban population. In this situation, it came as little surprise that the Act had virtually no effect on checking either the production of sick buildings or the increase in congestion.¹⁸²

Moreover, "town-planning" may have been about building, but it was definitely not about housing. In a telling comment on the social contradictions of the colonial urban order, new powers were conferred on a local government agency, the Bombay Municipal Corporation, which represented the class faction most resolutely opposed to any municipal sponsoring of public housing. Meanwhile, the 'social filter' of domination and its accompanying drawbacks of lack of consultation and accountability, guaranteed the failure of the state-devised housing scheme. It ensured that the Bombay government's new Development Department would attempt to devise a housing project without any of the architectural, design, lay-out, sanitary, and community considerations characteristic of the best of contemporary urban planning schemes. In effect, planning remained an alien and elusive concept for the Bombay government to grasp. As a result, the DD chawls were not about the creation of a new kind of social

¹⁸¹ *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1919, pp. 449, 785.

¹⁸² The proportion of the city's population living in 1-room tenements rose from 66 percent in 1921 to 75 percent in 1931. The figures for Glasgow and London in 1931 were 13.8 percent and 6 percent respectively. *CI*, 1931, vol. ix, pp. 89-90; Cage, p. 84.

space: they merely succeeded in extending northwards the degraded environment of much of the central inner city.

4. Empty suburbs, congested city streets: transportation and the failure of suburbanization.

The Bombay government did not conceive of suburbanisation as an optimal option capable of generating opportunities for all the citizens of Bombay. Its class-bound perspective continued to privilege the southern and south-western localities of the old city as the prime social spaces for elite residence. Indeed, migration to the northern suburbs was an option envisaged essentially for middle income professional groups--essentially clerks and public service employees. Moreover, the local colonial state had a very superficial understanding of the complex social and technological factors conducive to the process of suburbanization.

For those interested in moving out of congested localities where their workplaces would however remain, there were considerations of affordability and convenience: the relationship between real wages and transport and housing costs, but also whether the speed of transportation made commuting possible in the light of working hours; there was also the issue of improvement in lifestyle, ie whether the new places of residence provided a higher level of satisfaction of home-centred material needs. This was not only a question of more room and compound space and lower residential and building densities, but also of the provision of water-supply, drainage, and sewage systems.

The availability of accustomed collective services such as local transport, markets, schools, dispensaries, post offices, and places of amusement, was another important consideration. Finally, there were the crucial variables of 'sentiments' and symbols as attached to buildings, places, and people in the old city. Ancestral homes, places of worship, sacred sites such as *dargahs*, wells, and tanks, the accustomed neighbourhood spaces of festivals and processions, kinship associations and patterns of sociability, were all liable to impede the desire to move out of the city.¹⁸³ Moreover, these cultural traditions were likely to be stronger amongst the older established middle

¹⁸³On the sacred geography of the city, see R. P Masani, *Folklore of Wells* (Bombay 1918); S. M Edwardes, *By-Ways of Bombay* (Bombay 1912); Rahul Mehrotra & Sharada Dwivedi, *Banganga: Sacred Tank* (Bombay 1996).

classes--the target group for suburbanisation--than amongst the more recently arrived mill hands and labourers.

Even more significantly, the colonial government's new zeal in promoting suburban development was once again liable to come up against the disintegrative effects of differing inter-colonial interests. The Willingdon administration which came into office in 1913 was certainly more enthusiastic about railway electrification than the previous Sydenham regime which had rejected the idea in its 1909 Resolution on urban development. Indeed, another government-appointed Bombay Development Committee assumed, in 1914, that electrification 'up to the northern limit of Salsette residential development' was imminent.¹⁸⁴ The BB&CI Railway Company already operated a rather slow, commercially-oriented service between Colaba and Borivli in Salsette. Railways enabled a deeper radial penetration into the northern suburbs than tramways, and their electrification was essential for a quicker and more frequent passenger service between Bombay and Salsette. It only remained for the Bombay government to convince the Railway Board and the Government of India.

The BB&CI Company wished to build a new terminal station in Colaba in anticipation of the envisaged Back Bay reclamations designed to create new elite business and residential quarters in south Bombay. The Willingdon Administration was willing to give the go-ahead provided the BB&CI Board was prepared, initially, to electrify the railway line 'south of Dadar at least'. As additional justification, it stated that 'steam traction on this part of your line must cease as it is a public nuisance'. For the Board, however, the only issues were costs and profitability: it had grave doubts whether electrification would yield a 'sufficiently satisfactory return on the capital expended'. In vain did the Bombay government attempt to argue that the 'added convenience to the general public' would be 'well worth the small extra cost entailed'. In January 1915, the Agent of the BB&CI Railways finally advised that neither the

¹⁸⁴*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, p. xviii.

Company, nor the GOI were prepared to countenance the spending of 'a sum approximating to one hundred thousand pounds' to electrify their lines.¹⁸⁵

Without the increase in both transport mobility and capacity consequent upon rail electrification, any large-scale population movement to the northern suburbs was impossible. This would affect not only the projected settlement and development of Salsette, ie the sparsely populated localities between Bandra and Borivli, but also the regions immediately to the south, between Mahim Creek and Dadar. The Bombay government nonetheless pushed ahead with the rest of its plans, appointing a 'Special Officer, Salsette Building Sites' whose functions included the compulsory purchase of land under the Land Acquisition Act, the overseeing of land reclamations and of new coastal transport initiatives.¹⁸⁶ The construction of a local tramway link between the BB&CI station at Andheri and the agreeable fishing hamlet of Vesava on the Arabian sea-coast three and a half miles to the north, was regarded as especially important. It would link the railway with 'an attractive stretch of coast line', providing 'an impetus to the development of the intervening vacant tract of country'.¹⁸⁷

The Bombay government anticipated a considerable increase in the population of Vesava as a result of the arrival of the new tramway.¹⁸⁸ With the BEST Company showing no interest in extending its operations to Salsette, a local promoter, R. D Curranee, proposed to undertake the venture and construct a single line petrol-powered tramway. The agreement with the Bombay government, which itself offered no contribution to the infrastructural costs of the project, stipulated the payment of a deposit of five percent of the capital costs to the treasury on the part of Curranee's Andheri Tramway Company by June 1915. However, with the raising of loans on the money-market now severely restricted as a result of war-time conditions, Curranee

¹⁸⁵*GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1915, pp. 487-95.

¹⁸⁶*ibid.*, 1913, p. 805.

¹⁸⁷*ibid.*, 1914, p. 667.

¹⁸⁸*ibid.*, p. 676.

requested a six-month extension of the period to raise the deposit. The Bombay government refused, and the entire project was shelved.¹⁸⁹

The collapse of the key transport dimension of its suburbanisation strategy effectively left the Bombay government with only the dubious--and tempting--“developmental” lever of land acquisition. Entire villages, such as Kolhe-Kalyan and Wakola near Santa Cruz railway station were compulsorily acquired from their *maliki* owners at well under the market value of the lands, in spite of protests from landowners and displaced rice-cultivating villagers;¹⁹⁰ in Sahar, 3500 acres of land were acquired at 4-8 annas per square yard and a small proportion was then resold to developers at Rs.3-5 per square yard. Most of the land, however, found no buyers.¹⁹¹ A worried A. E Mirams, Consulting Surveyor to the Bombay government, urged the General Department to issue ‘..a brochure describing the schemes and giving the area of plots thus made available as building sites and their values..’¹⁹²

Mirams premised his request by asserting that since the ‘Town Planning schemes of Salsette’ were now ‘approaching completion’, urgent steps needed to be taken ‘to facilitate building development as much as possible’. This was, once again, an odd understanding of town planning, as it appeared to conceive of built structures entirely independently of their intended recipients. Indeed, the absence of improved transport links with Bombay effectively undermined any strategy of attracting substantial population to the area, nor was there any immediate prospect of an adequate local public transit service. There were, moreover, other problems which often seemed to take the colonial authorities by surprise, and which they were unable to address given the fragmented and poorly resourced nature of the public administration system they presided over. It was not until 1919, for instance, that the Bombay government appeared to realise that no single agency was actually responsible for the water-supply

¹⁸⁹*ibid.*, 1915, pp. 880-81.

¹⁹⁰*BC*, 29 April 1921.

¹⁹¹*BC*, 26 May 1923.

¹⁹²*GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1918, p. 729.

in Salsette which was, as a result, considerably worse than even the poorly supplied northern wards of the city.¹⁹³

Indeed suburban “town planning” closely followed the fragmented model of the development of Bombay itself. The failure to appreciate the developmental inter-relationships between city and suburbs meant that no attempt was made, until the late 1920s, to reassign Salsette to Bombay municipal jurisdiction. Town planning schemes were initiated within an unchanged structure of local government which in Salsette consisted of multiple and unequal local authorities, all under the revenue jurisdiction of the Bombay Presidency ^{Northern} ~~Central~~ Divisional Commissioner based at Ahmedabad.¹⁹⁴

Bandra, Kurla, and Juhu had their own municipalities, while Santa Cruz, Andheri, Ville Parle, and Goregaon were under the jurisdiction of ‘Notified Area Committees’ with considerably less powers; the overwhelmingly rural localities to the east and north of these catchment areas had virtually no capacity to raise their own public revenues. Bandra, the closest settlement to Bombay, also had the most population and the highest value properties, and therefore the highest municipal revenue derived essentially from property taxes. Even so, Bandra, and still less any of the other authorities, was hardly in a position to generate the financial resources to meet the needs of the envisaged expansion in population.¹⁹⁵

From 1913 onwards, the Bombay government allocated a meagre annual grant of forty thousand rupees--or double a year’s salary of the Special Officer, Salsette Building Sites--to be distributed by the latter amongst *all* the local authorities for ‘original works’ (eg the construction of roads and markets) in relation to residential town planning.¹⁹⁶ This was clearly inadequate for its intended purposes and also underlined the local colonial state’s inability to imagine a new administrative framework consistent with its professed “planning” objectives. Existing arrangements

¹⁹³ibid., 1919, p. 471.

¹⁹⁴GOB *Development Proceedings* 1920, p. 47.

¹⁹⁵GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1925, pp. 871-895; BC, 11 Aug. 1925.

¹⁹⁶GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1913, p. 329; 1917, p. 381; 1918, p. 529.

rendered any coordination of (eventual) services such as transport and water-supply across the whole of Salsette impossible. Colonial parsimony, compounded by the uncoordinated nature of suburban schemes, ensured that, by 1925, the entire area still had no drains, sewers, hospital, or fire brigade services, very few schools, and only three dispensaries--at Bandra, Andheri, and Kurla.¹⁹⁷

By this time, only Bandra, Santa Cruz, Andheri, and Kurla were supplied--very inefficiently--with a piped water-supply by the Bombay Municipality; the rest of Salsette made the best of the vicissitudes of well water. Streets were lit with kerosene lamps, and even these were described as 'few and far between'.¹⁹⁸ "Town planning", in these circumstances, amounted to a grave misnomer. Much of the acquired land remained undeveloped: while in the urbanized areas, fifteen years of poorly devised, under-resourced, uncoordinated, and unsupervised schemes signally failed to create sanitary buildings and healthy suburbs. Santa Cruz, Vile Parle, and Andheri were described as harbouring 'hideous slums' due to 'non-existent sanitation', while Kurla was perceived as 'a slum-land and a serious menace to the city of Bombay'.¹⁹⁹ These "urban" settlements, moreover, only extended from Bandra to Andheri in the west, and from Kurla to Ghatkopar in the east, mirroring the limited services respectively offered by the BB&CI and GIP Railways. The major part of Salsette remained underpopulated, and probably to the great relief of its inhabitants, 'almost wholly rural'.²⁰⁰

Thus, in a trend diametrically opposite to contemporary European patterns of suburbanization, a suburban region about six times the surface area of Bombay city only contained one-eighth of its population.²⁰¹ Moreover, by the end of the 1920s, one-third of the approximately 150,000 inhabitants of Salsette lived in Bandra alone. Juhu was recorded as having a mere 1,851 inhabitants, Santa Cruz 2,461, Andheri 6,

¹⁹⁷*ibid.*, 1925, p. 873.

¹⁹⁸*ibid.*

¹⁹⁹*ibid.*, pp. 893-94.

²⁰⁰*ibid.*, p. 871.

²⁰¹*BC*, 2 Sept. 1923.

510, Ghatkopar 8,168, and Vile Parle 11,290.²⁰² Although one of the major objectives of his own specially created Development Department was the development of south Salsette,²⁰³ George Lloyd, who succeeded Willingdon as governor, attempted to dampen the hopes that plans for the northern extension of the city had previously raised. Singularly obsessed by his Back Bay Reclamation Project, he now rejected any immediate prospect of the suburbanisation of Salsette. He attempted to argue, ironically just as London suburban rail services were about to be electrified within a 15-mile radius from Charing Cross, that there was 'little analogy' between Bombay and the 'great urban' conurbations of London and New York. There, suburbs were much closer to the heart of the city, while from the Fort, 'it was 12 miles to Bandra alone'.²⁰⁴

He could not persuade the railway companies to electrify their lines; even if they did, passengers could not be carried at cheap enough rates 'to make the clerical and business population willing to live there without some considerable enhancement of their wages'. Nor were such wage rises desirable as they would simply mean '..heavy new charges upon the business trade of the city..'²⁰⁵ In a nutshell, Lloyd propounded the logic that underlay colonial capitalism's lack of economic dynamism, and which dictated the fate of suburbanisation.

The railways, *the* technology of colonial interests *par excellence*,²⁰⁶ were primarily oriented towards freight rather than passenger transport; in turn, notoriously low wages, which included most of the city's 'middle class' employees, ensured that passenger demand for commuter services to the northern suburbs remained weak; this was compounded by the substantial raising of third-class fares and season tickets by the

²⁰²CI, 1931, vol. ix, pp. 18-31.

²⁰³GOB *Development Proceedings* 1920, p. 47.

²⁰⁴BC, 13 Aug. 1921.

²⁰⁵ibid.

²⁰⁶Ian J. Kerr, *Colonialism and Technological Choice. The Case of the Railways of India in Itinerario* xix: 2 (1995), p. 94.

railway companies in 1922-23.²⁰⁷ In an era of rising prices, the railway companies, and the colonial state which politically controlled them, were reluctant to incur the costs of electrification: the railways were unable to see a profitable return on the basis of projected increases in passenger traffic, while the Government of India, in the pessimistic postwar financial climate, was even less keen than usual to undertake any public investment. Thus, within colonial paradigms, there was no real solution to this situation since the Bombay government and the indigenous capitalist class were equally hostile both to wage increases and to any form of travel subsidies.

If the “middle class” Bombay clerk was the quintessential would-be suburban migrant in the eyes of colonial officialdom, it was easy to see why such hopes were profoundly misplaced. By the early 1920s, his monthly wage was still under fifty rupees²⁰⁸ while, of all the professional groups in the city, he was the most likely to face redundancy as a result of the economic recession that followed the boom of the early postwar years.²⁰⁹ Moreover, his long, sometimes 12-hour working day ending at 8 p.m., would have made even the (optimistically) forty minute train journey to Bandra in the notorious third-class passenger compartment a daunting prospect.²¹⁰ In these circumstances, relocation was both inappropriate and unaffordable. In the suburbs, moreover, most bazaar articles of daily consumption had to be brought in by train from Bombay and were therefore more expensive than in the city.²¹¹ Finally, the stark absence of amenities necessarily meant a harder daily life which could only be assuaged by the employment of a vast retinue of servants. By definition, this was an option only available to the upper classes.

²⁰⁷Third-class fares, which formed 83 percent of the rail companies' income, were increased by over 16 percent while season tickets were raised by 25 and 15 percent respectively by the BB & CI and GIP Railways; first and second class fares, which contributed 17 percent of the total income, were left unchanged. The vast majority of Indians, of course, travelled third-class. *New Times*, 15 April 1923; *BNNR*, no. 15, 1923. *BC*, 19 Jan. 1923.

²⁰⁸*BC*, 23 Jan. 1923.

²⁰⁹*BC*, 8 Sept. 1922.

²¹⁰*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, part II: Oral Evidence, p. 239; part I, p. xxiii.

²¹¹*BC*, 27 Oct. 1919.

If railway electrification was indispensable for vertical suburbanisation, the tramway could also play an important supporting role by extending its lines northwards to link up with train stations, thus multiplying points of access and accelerating mobility between city and suburbs. However, neither the Bombay government, nor the Municipal Corporation ever came close to devising a coherent transport policy that would integrate train and tram services. The management boards of both the privately-owned BEST Company and the state-controlled BB&CI Railway Company vied with each other for the only promising passenger market, that of south and central Bombay.²¹² To complicate matters further, the Bombay Development Committee, while recommending northward tramway extensions from Byculla Bridge to Dadar, Tardeo to Worli and Mahim, and Parel to King's Circle, also advocated a new electrified underground rail system for local passenger traffic between Grant Road and Colaba.²¹³

Unlike train services, the tramways were electrified between 1905 and 1908, a technological innovation virtually simultaneous with street railway developments in Europe.²¹⁴ At this time, the tram network, essentially a legacy of the horse-drawn era, comprised 20.8 miles of track overwhelmingly concentrated in the inner city, merely extending as far north as Elphinstone Road in Parel. Over the next 20 years only a further 6.5 miles were added, of which the one northward extension, from Parel to Dadar, comprised just 1.2 miles.²¹⁵ Moreover, poor roads and, especially, the cumulative problems of human and traffic congestion quickly nullified the envisaged increases in speed.

²¹²Appearing before the Bombay Development Committee in 1914, the Managing Director of BEST, Frank Rimington, felt compelled to point out the tramways' advantages of greater frequency and more extensive street network over the railways. *Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, p. 174.

²¹³*ibid.*, p. xviii; Pestonji D. Mahaluxmivala, *The History of the Bombay Electric Supply and Tramways Company Limited, 1905-1935* (Bombay 1936), pp. 136-37.

²¹⁴Here the electrification period was generally between 1895 and 1901, eg Berlin (1895-1899), Glasgow (1898-1901), Milan (1896-1900); London (1901-1905) followed close behind. Capuzzo, *Between Politics and Technology..*, p. 4.

²¹⁵Mahaluxmivala, p. 150.

Technically, electrification enabled a maximum speed of 18 m.p.h: however, over the first five years following the inauguration of the new service, the average speed of trams averaged only 6.75 m.p.h 'owing to the very frequent stopping resulting from the density of the population and the narrowness and crowded conditions of many of the streets'.²¹⁶ Moreover, an increase in accidents led the police and the Municipal Corporation to advise the Tramway Company to fit its cars with more effective brakes. Rather than invest in new brakes, however, the Company, with the agreement of the Municipal Corporation, simply opted to lock the brake controllers thereby cutting the maximum speed to 12 m.p.h. In increasingly congested streets, the average speed of the "electrified" trams declined still further, reaching, by 1925, 4.8 m.p.h, slower than the old horse cars, and making the Bombay tramways 'the slowest in the world'.²¹⁷

While electrification did not produce any appreciable gains in speed, it did enable the running of more and bigger tram cars and consequently an increase in the daily number of passengers: from 71,947 carried by 195 horse-drawn tram cars in 1905, to 120,800 accommodated in 230 'single truck' cars and 'bogie trains' in 1916, and to over 200,000 transported by 520 'train cars' in 1925.²¹⁸ But passengers could only travel seven and a half miles more on the electrified circuit than on the old horse tram network and the overwhelming proportion of this extra mileage was taken up by extensions to inner city lines.

Like the railways, the BEST Company's policy on extensions was essentially guided by the need to secure a 'fair return' on its capital outlay.²¹⁹ Even before the War, it was clear that the Company was reluctant to undertake any development 'from which profit was not really or immediately discernible'.²²⁰ In the absence of any direct

²¹⁶*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, p. 174.

²¹⁷Mahaluxmivala, pp. 237-39.

²¹⁸Frank Conlon, *Tramways in the Urban Development of Colonial Bombay, 1870-1935*, p. 14; Paper presented at a conference on "Suburbanising the Masses: Public Transport and Urban Development in Historical Perspective", at the National Railway Museum, York, UK, November 1997. *BC*, 18 July 1916; Mahaluxmivala, p. 157.

²¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 245.

²²⁰*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, p. 30.

financial incentives from the Bombay government or the Municipal Corporation, northward extensions, even within Bombay city limits, were not perceived as economically viable owing to low passenger projections. The BEST management impeccably adhered to the class logic of colonial urban development: lines would only be driven in the proximity of the old city's commercial localities or of its well-to-do residential areas.

The two exceptions to this rule which dictated the confined spatial geography of tram line expansion merely confirmed its general validity. In 1917, the Tramway Company undertook an extension from Parel to Dadar, just to the north, where the meeting of the BB&CI and GIP railway lines would guarantee remunerative traffic; and in 1921, it agreed to a request by the East Indian Cotton Association to extend its lines along Reay Road to the new Cotton Green Depot in Mazagaon, even though it had at the time suspended consideration of new lines pending the resolution of a dispute with the Municipal Corporation over tram fares and electric supply tariffs. This was, stated the Managing Director, an 'exceptional case', justified by its 'extreme importance to a very large section of the commercial communities of this city'.²²¹

In contrast, BEST relied on the Bombay government's own argument in rejecting the proposed extension from Tardeo along Mahaluxmi Road to Worli: the 'smell nuisance' caused by the Love Grove sewage pumping station precluded the emergence of upper class residential settlements in the area and therefore any 'viable demand for improved communications'. Moreover, while an alternative tram route could be devised to reach Worli, the lack of demand from the existing working class chawl population there meant that there was 'no hope of a tramway paying at present'. Instead, the Managing Director stated that he was willing to investigate the possibility of running a local omnibus service in Worli on condition that the Bombay government assisted the venture with a 'small subsidy'. He suggested a figure of around '..Rs.3000 per month' for an experimental daily bus service, with buses running every ten minutes

²²¹Mahaluxmivala, pp. 96-99.

from 6 a.m to 8 p.m for a three-month trial period. The Bombay government rejected the request.²²²

The proposed northward extension from Dadar to King's Circle was similarly rejected on grounds of economic unviability, while an alternative trackless trolley experiment over the same route was ultimately dismissed as unsuitable for Bombay and as likely to cause the Tramway Company 'a considerable loss'.²²³ Indeed, in the post-war era, BEST became unwilling to undertake virtually any proposed tramway development. The War had resulted in a tripling of the costs both of building rolling stock and of laying electrified tracks, while the price of coal had increased by 250 percent;²²⁴ between 1913 and 1919, on the other hand, the number of passengers had only risen by 54 percent:²²⁵ these circumstances soon led the Tramway Company to conclude that '..we can discern no extension of the tramways which would pay the Company, even if fares were readjusted over the whole system'.²²⁶

Instead, BEST switched investment to its electricity supply branch though it significantly declined the option of applying for the license to supply Salsette.²²⁷ Within Bombay, there was now an increasing demand for electric power from commercial and industrial enterprises, from government offices and public buildings, and from individuals and private bodies for domestic and ceremonial purposes; in addition, the emergence of cinema and the development of illuminated "neon" advertising signs,²²⁸ all combined to place the supply of electricity at the cutting edge of commercial opportunity. By the mid-1920s, it was solely the electricity branch that made BEST a profitable enterprise: in 1925, for instance, the Company's overall profit

²²²ibid., pp. 114, 120-21.

²²³ibid., pp. 111-12.

²²⁴ibid., p. 187.

²²⁵*Administration Reports of the Government of Bombay, 1914-1920.*

²²⁶Mahaluxmivala, p. 246.

²²⁷ibid., p. 381.

²²⁸ibid., p. 334.

of sixty-two percent was derived from the revenue gained from expanding power supply operations.²²⁹

A permanent bone of contention between BEST and the Municipal Corporation was the latter's refusal to sanction any increase to the near-universal one-anna fare negotiated in 1905. While opposition to any rise was enthusiastically supported by nationalist activists, it is important to note that the vast majority of urban workers, who earned between eight and twelve annas a day, could not, as Geddes observed, afford a two-way tram ride. The one-anna ticket was essentially a popular middle-class fare, but by the early 1920s it was clear that the numerical limitations and the unchanged fare structure of the urban middle-class passenger market had become further obstacles to tramway expansion. The peaking of this class-based demand for public transport and the resulting paralysis in the expansion of tram communications served as an ironic commentary on the entire process of colonial suburban development. The high hopes of increased northward mobility that had accompanied electrification had been undone both by the exclusionary workings of an anti-social market economy and by the urban middle class's determination to maintain its fare privileges.

These conditions merely enabled the trickling of an upper class elite towards the northern suburbs, with no effect on the desperate levels of congestion in the inner city. Indeed, they accentuated the tendency for the Indian town to creep further and further southwards. By the mid-1920s, Hornby Road was no longer quite the prestigious centre of the European business world, and had already acquired a predominantly Indian commercial population.²³⁰ With public transportation unable to sustain even middle class suburbanisation, the arrival of the private motor car, and the powerful colonial and moneyed lobby it immediately gave rise to, soon reinforced the elitist character of official discourse on suburbanization. Much less prominent were considerations of spatial impact on an overcrowded city, pressure on existing road surfaces, and pedestrian safety and well-being.

²²⁹BC, 18 March 1926.

²³⁰*Times of India Directory* 1925, pp. 569-75.

In the early years of the century, the Motor Union of Western India began to organise “Bombay Motor Trials” under the patronage of the Governor and with the cooperation of the Public Works Department and the police. Only the Railways held aloof, apparently fearing the eventual competition of the automobile.²³¹ These trials, held on the highways between Bombay, Poona, and Mahableshwar, were initially carefully made to appeal to the needs of colonial officialdom. Their objective, the Motor Union stated, was to discover ‘the best type of vehicle’ suitable for those officials who ‘have to go on tour during the cold season’.²³² The Anglo-Indian *Bombay Gazette*, however, felt that there was much more at stake: in an era of acute competition for markets between British, American, and French car manufacturers, it hoped ‘for the sake of British prestige’ and commercial profitability that the trials would affirm the superiority of British made cars.²³³

Indeed, of all the artifacts of the second industrial revolution, the *Gazette* seized upon the motor car as *the* magical instrument of modern progress, possessing an unparalleled ability to transform life in India. In cities like Bombay, it proclaimed, ‘the motor car has succeeded where even the tram car has failed, for it is teaching the native to look ahead and to perceive that the middle of the road is not the place for an aimless saunter’.

The act of ‘raising the eyes’ would help promote a new ‘habit of activity’ amongst ‘natives’, essential for an understanding of the importance and value of time which in turn was a vital precondition for economic development! The *Gazette* was in earnest. Moreover, unlike the railways, there were few places where the car could not go, making it an invaluable asset in enabling ‘ruling and ruled races’ achieve a better mutual understanding.²³⁴

²³¹BG, 7 Oct. 1904 and 11 Jan. 1906.

²³²BG, 4 Jan. 1905.

²³³BG, 24 Feb. 1905.

²³⁴BG, 13 Dec. 1904.

Car ownership rapidly became a prime symbol of upper class affluence. From the small number initially registered in the city in 1905, cars increased rapidly to 2,123 by 1914; a decade later, there were over 10,000.²³⁵ The movable space of the automobile, moreover, also gave rise to new built structures: between 1901 and 1921, newly erected garages for motor vehicles contributed substantially to the increase in the number of buildings in Bombay.²³⁶ There were now high hopes amongst the various development agencies that the motor car would become 'a potent factor' in the northward diffusion of the 'wealthier classes', initially at least as far as Matunga until amenities in Salsette were improved.²³⁷ The automobile, the Improvement Trust believed, would help overturn the lack of demand for its plots in the north of the city. During the war years, the Trust embarked on luxury residential schemes adjacent to the Worli and Dharavi water fronts, designed '..for the upper classes who can afford to keep motor cars'.²³⁸

Even the motor car, however, failed to generate any major thoroughfare to the north of the city, or any new roads in the north itself,²³⁹ nor did it have any substantial impact on road improvement during this period. Although the long envisaged major north-south highway was finally embarked upon by the Improvement Trust, the dramatic escalation in costs during the War years coupled with the colonial state's policy of financial retrenchment, made progress painfully slow. By 1924, the new "Eastern Avenue" only comprised an extension of Parel Road from Sandhurst Road to Lalbaug.²⁴⁰ Further north, not only was Mahim characterized by lanes in 'wretched

²³⁵*Annual Reports of the Bombay City Police 1914 and 1924.*

²³⁶*CI*, 1921, vol. ix, part B, p. vii.

²³⁷*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, pp. 148, vii.

²³⁸*BITR* 1916, p. 15.

²³⁹With the exception of Dadar where roads were built to enable the tramway extension from Parel and to provide access to the Improvement Trust's new Dadar-Matunga residential estate. There were, significantly, complaints that these 'broad roads', had been opened for the 'pressing needs of motorists' while water-supply in these northern localities continued to be very poor. Dwivedi & Mehrotra, op. cit. pp. 168-171; *BC*, 4 May 1918.

²⁴⁰*Bombay Presidency Administration Report 1923-24*, p. 165.

conditions' rather than proper roads, but there still was '..no general plan for the development of future roads and drains'.²⁴¹

Although this section of Eastern Avenue--like the Trust's Princess Street and Sandhurst Road--was constructed with an asphalt surface and a cement concrete bottom, few other roads outside the Fort were able to withstand the crushing pressure of the new motor vehicles.²⁴² The greater part of the one hundred and sixty-eight-mile road network still lacked any foundational subcrust while surface and sub-soil drainage was generally defective.²⁴³ The macadam and mud surfaces often tended to break up, while the rubber tyres of motor vehicles were held responsible for throwing up 'at least six times as much dust' as the iron bound wheels of ox-carts and *ticca-gharries*.²⁴⁴ During the monsoon, on the other hand, roads were transformed into 'ankle deep' slush which speeding cars liberally sprayed on to hapless pedestrians.²⁴⁵

The motor car thus affected the materiality of the urban landscape itself as well as citizens' safety and well-being. In an age before the full health implications of air pollution from petroleum vehicle exhausts were recognised, there was still considerable alarm, in a city prone to respiratory diseases, at the 'clouds of dust raised by passing motor-cars which go to swell the doctor's bill and the city's death-rate..'²⁴⁶ By the mid-1920s moreover, the twelve thousand motor vehicles in circulation contributed substantially to the increasing congestion, competing for street space with trams, ox-carts, victorias, bicycles, and pedestrians. Pedestrians were now at risk in virtually any of the city's roads: in the crowded working class neighbourhoods in the centre and north-west of the island where narrow thoroughfares also tended to have the busiest street-life. A concerned citizen wrote to the *Bombay Chronicle*:

²⁴¹Orr, *The need for co-operation..*, p. 8; BC, 31 Jan. 1923.

²⁴²GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1915, p. 90; BMCR 1921-22, pp. ix-x.

²⁴³*Report of the Bombay Development Committee*, pp. 30, 163.

²⁴⁴BC, 14 Nov. 1914.

²⁴⁵BC, 23 Sept. 1920.

²⁴⁶*ibid.*

*Vehicular traffic on Ferguson Road (in Lower Parel) during the daytime is very heavy as it is one of the main thoroughfares of the mill district. It is only about 20 feet wide and the small footpaths on both sides are rendered useless by the people living on the ground floor of the chawls on this street. (Moreover) some portions of the footpaths are occupied by the vegetable and fruit sellers..(so that) people have no other way but to walk through the centre of the road though constantly in danger of being over-run by the fast driven Military Cars..*²⁴⁷

But accidents were probably even more frequent in the broader avenues of south Bombay where motorists were more likely to indulge in the new “sport” of racing. The long, winding Queen’s Road was a particular danger spot, with its three railway stations at Churchgate, Marine Lines, and Charni Road, unloading passengers directly on to the main road, a situation described as having ‘no parallel’ to any other city.²⁴⁸ By the war years, the new dangers of the street had become ‘a perennial subject of discussion’ in the city.²⁴⁹ The architect Claude Batley called for the creation of ‘breathing spaces’ around landmarks such as Bori Bunder, Flora Fountain, and Wellington Fountain ‘where the pedestrian can stand and pause or saunter at his ease’. Surrounding streets, he observed, had now become ‘wide expanses of bewilderingly dangerous’ motor traffic, and needed to be reclaimed for trams and pedestrians.²⁵⁰

As elsewhere in the world, the fatalities and injuries suffered by pedestrians were causing increasing concern. Victims tended to be predominantly children and the elderly, the most vulnerable age-groups to speeding traffic.²⁵¹ ‘Rash driving’ was compounded by the absence of an agreed system of signalling and the confusion over the rules regarding overtaking--on the right in the case of other motor vehicles and

²⁴⁷BC, 25 July 1919.

²⁴⁸According to a Committee appointed by the Bombay government to consider the ‘better regulation of traffic’ in the city; *GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1923, p. 1320.

²⁴⁹BC, 22 May 1916.

²⁵⁰BC, 8 Dec. 1923.

²⁵¹*Annual Report of the Bombay City Police* 1918, p. 17.

horse-driven conveyances, but on the left in the case of tram cars.²⁵² Moreover, the haphazard nature of the city's built structures meant the existence of a large number of blind corners, while dust by day and poor lighting by night aggravated problems of visibility.²⁵³

The colonial approach to traffic control and street safety was characteristically dictated both by an unwillingness to confront a powerful upper class lobby and by considerations of 'financial priority'; unlike Britain, therefore, official response to the new conditions was very slow. The initial speed limit, only introduced in 1915, was set at a relatively high twenty miles per hour, though the absence of trained traffic control police meant that even this rule was '...more honoured in the breach than the observance'.²⁵⁴ The press called on magistrates to impose severe penalties on rash drivers '...as London magistrates had recently done on Lord Curzon'.²⁵⁵ Nor were owners of motor vehicles legally liable for injuries to persons.²⁵⁶ The provision and training of specialized traffic police personnel, on the other hand, had to await a 'favourable financial climate', and it was only in May 1925 that the Bombay government released funds for the setting-up of a self-contained Traffic Control Department within the Bombay police force.²⁵⁷

The Bombay pedestrian, whom the motor car was intended to awake from an alleged age-old 'habit of contemplation' and whose apparent 'lack of traffic sense' the police tended to regard as responsible for most accidents, was perhaps not such a singular individual after all. Indeed, there is little to suggest that his response to the novel phenomenon of motorised street traffic was any different from his counterpart in European cities. Universally, the arrival of the motor car now meant that the rules implicit in the accustomed habit of walking the streets, when pedestrians merely had to

²⁵²*The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 11 June 1919; *GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1920, p. 843.

²⁵³*ibid.*, 1923, pp. 1322-23.

²⁵⁴*ibid.*, 1920, p. 719.

²⁵⁵*Sanj Vartaman*, 15 June 1920; *BNNR* no. 19, 1920.

²⁵⁶*BC*, 18 July 1922.

²⁵⁷*GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1922, p. 1543; and 1925, p. 1346.

make small adjustments in their speed to avoid collisions with one another, were no longer sufficient. The mutually ^{intelligible} communication through glances and signs were obsolete in the face of the new relentlessness of moving machines. The citizens of Bombay, as elsewhere, were very liable at this stage to make errors in judging the 'arrival' time of motor vehicles moving at variable speeds. But, as in so many areas of their social lives, they were less able than their European contemporaries to draw on any solid regulatory protective framework.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸Pedestrians were given little attention by traffic police who were very reluctant to hold up motor vehicle traffic. As a result, they usually had to wait '..for the passage of a long stream of vehicles of all descriptions..with considerable loss of time and temper', making them all the more liable to run across the street. *BC*, 27 Sept. 1916.

Chapter two: War, Censorship, and Civic dissent: Bombay in the First World War.

1. War and the militarization of the city.

August and September were normally the quietest months of the year in Bombay as the city settled into its annual monsoon season. But George V's declaration of war on Germany on behalf of the entire British Empire at 11.00 p.m on 4 August 1914, rapidly disrupted this tradition. Very quickly, trains arriving into the city were filled with soldiers and military officers either bound for the Western Front or coming to take up residence in Bombay on staff duty. Passenger liners from Britain poured in more military personnel as well as colonial officers and civilians whose holidays at home had been cut short by the outbreak of war.¹

Even though J. D Tata offered the use of the exclusive *Taj Mahal* hotel to the military, accomodation in the city rapidly ran short with hotels reportedly having to sleep three in a room.² In October, a number of hoteliers, including the manager of the prestigious *Watson's* on the Esplanade, were each fined five rupees for failing to notify the police about their foreign residents, in contravention of a Government of India War Ordinance.³ Indeed 'hostile aliens', a term describing German and Austrian nationals, immediately felt the full impact of being caught up in "enemy" territory.⁴

Germans employed by various government departments and by transnational firms such as Thomas Cook & Son found themselves detained and despatched to prisoner of war camps set up in Ahmednagar district. Bombay University and St. Xavier's College both lost, by the same process, a number of their staff, while German women and children from British East Africa were soon ushered into detention camps in Belgaum.⁵

¹BC, 14 Sept. 1914.

²TOI, 23 Oct. 1914; BC, 14 Sept. 1914.

³BC, 23 Oct. 1914.

⁴GOB Confidential Proceedings 1915, pp. B1-1, B2-1.

⁵ibid.; GOB Financial Proceedings 1915, part B, p. 96; FR, first fortnight February 1915.

Both Bombay city and the wider hinterland were perceived as fertile grounds for the recruitment of soldiers and auxiliary army workers. The Millowners Association, the Municipal Corporation, the Port Trust, the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, and the Indian Chamber of Commerce, all received letters from the Government of India's Political Department requesting them, as large employers of labour, to actively assist the city's Recruiting Officer.⁶ Bombay's labouring "warrior" Maratha population and other "turbulent" lower castes were quickly identified as 'excellent material' for soldiering and soon Maratha, Mahar, Konkani, and Bhandari regiments were formed while Native Christians provided the bulk of army 'cooks, boys and mates'.⁷

War also immediately brought about the militarization of social space which accentuated the city's congested and insanitary character. Half a century of continuous spatial development of commercial establishments had nonetheless not been allowed to impinge on the significant colonial military presence in south Bombay. Even before 1914, Upper Colaba was regarded as 'practically a military reservation'.⁸ With the outbreak of war, the army also occupied vast tracts of land owned by the Improvement Trust in Dadar 'at a nominal rent' and without reference to the Trust Board.⁹

The military also virtually took over the running of the Bombay port which emerged as the centre of India's war effort, particularly when the conflict spread to the geopolitically crucial eastern arena of Mesopotamia in late 1914.¹⁰ The port became the

⁶*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1915, p. B-2.

⁷*FR* (2) January 1918.

⁸*CI*, 1911, vol. viii, part I, p. 3.

⁹*BC*, 14 Oct. 1916.

¹⁰Between 1914 and 1918, one and a quarter million Indian soldiers and auxiliaries embarked from Bombay. Almost half of them were despatched to Mesopotamia (Iraq). Indians also served in France on the notorious Western Front, as well as in the Dardenelles, Egypt, Aden, and East Africa. In London, the Imperial War Cabinet noted that 'Mesopotamia was largely conquered by Indian troops' while also emphasizing the geopolitical importance of the entire region:

'..The swift and brilliant stroke which gave us Basra in November 1914 assumed the protection of the installations of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at Abadan and the oilfields, in which the Admiralty are so largely interested, and probably arrested a Pan-Islamic movement on a large scale throughout Mesopotamia, Persia, and Afghanistan, which might easily have developed into a "Jihad" on the Indian frontier. It may justly be asserted that this timely offensive stroke saved India from being involved in a great

base from which over a million Indian army personnel embarked for the various theatres of war. It also served as an immense storage facility for the hardware, equipment, and food supplies destined for military use, particularly in the Middle East.¹¹

Docks now extended for four miles along the eastern shore of the island, from the Fort to Mazagaon;¹² in the Fort itself, over sixty-six acres of land on its eastern side became occupied by dockyard establishments, including Royal Indian Marine Dockyard Officers' quarters; while on the western side, the erection of new barracks reinforced the character of Queen's Road as the residence of the upper ranks of the military.¹³ At the same time, workers employed in docks, harbour works, and ships increased threefold to around thirty thousand between 1914 and 1917. Once again, however, little attention was paid to their accommodation needs, forcing the majority of dock labourers to 'provide themselves with shelter under the most insanitary conditions' in Dongri and Mandvi.¹⁴ As a result, 'B' Ward had become, by 1918, the most residentially overcrowded locality in the city, with houses containing on average two and a half times their optimum number of dwellers.¹⁵

Increased overcrowding also became a feature of public transport: a large number of cars were taken out of the tramway service and transformed into tram ambulances for ferrying wounded soldiers from the docks to the hospitals;¹⁶ while the

war on her borders, the consequences of which would have been a serious strain on the vital resources of the whole British Empire..'*IO, Political and Secret Annual Files: L/P &S/11/1918: Imperial War Cabinet--Memorandum on Events in India 1917-18; L/P &S/1919: Mesopotamia; BC, 6 Jan. 1919.*

¹¹Nithya K. Chari, *History of Bombay 1918-1939* (unpublished PHD thesis, University of Bombay 1983), p. 2.

¹²The new Alexandra Dock, with its 17 berths, was the first to be built as a non-tidal dock. This meant that ships could now enter at any time without having to wait for the high tide, a situation which also led to the speeding up of the dock labouring process. A. R. Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing in Bombay. A Study in the Economic Conditions of the Wage-Earning Classes in Bombay* (London 1925), pp. 73, 76. *Report on the Administration of the Bombay Presidency 1919-1920*, p. v.

¹³GOB Development Proceedings 1921, p. 19.

¹⁴ibid., pp. 19-21.

¹⁵GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings 1919, p. 1657.

¹⁶TOI, 25 Nov. 1914.

requisitioning of rail wagons for military needs reduced the passenger carrying capacity of the railways.¹⁷ In early 1916, the Army also instructed the Bombay government to furnish them with a full list of civilians owning motor vehicles in the Bombay Presidency.¹⁸ With the gradual requisitioning of ships, both commercial shipping and civilian maritime travel were soon drastically curtailed, and by 1916 women and children were no longer permitted to travel by sea.¹⁹ Moreover, as a result of a perceived threat to the city from German submarines, regulations requiring the night-time extinguishing of lights in buildings along the western shore of the island also soon came into effect.²⁰

In the city, the *maidans* which comprised the bulk of the relatively few open spaces, now came to serve as temporary billets for troops on their way to the various theatres of war. The Cooperage and Marine Lines *maidans* were occupied virtually permanently, raising serious problems of drainage and sanitation.²¹ The city also served as the primary medical centre for the war wounded: between January and October 1916 alone, over 120,000 sick and injured soldiers from the Mesopotamia campaign arrived in Bombay.²² Existing hospital accommodation rapidly became inadequate, and the military authorities requisitioned new public buildings such as the Royal Institute of Science and the Prince of Wales Museum which were converted into war hospitals. By 1917, twelve military hospitals employing large numbers of staff had come into existence. Similarly, the War Purposes Board, set up by the Bombay

¹⁷Periodically, as in November 1915 and May 1916, the press carried daily letters of complaint against overcrowding on trains. See *BC*, November 1915 and May 1916. Moreover, railway officials in charge of goods traffic also took advantage of the situation and traders found themselves having to pay 'large sums of money' to secure wagons. *DCI Reports*, July 1920.

¹⁸*GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1916, p. 521.

¹⁹*FRs* (1) Nov. 1915 and (1) Feb. 1917.

²⁰*GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings* June 1917, 380-394.

²¹*BC*, 24 Sept. 1914.

²²Willingdon to Lloyd George, 7 Oct. 1916. *Willingdon Papers*.

government to coordinate the local production of war materials, occupied the first floor of the new Customs House.²³

The GIP Railway Workshops in Parel were expanded and diversified, working through the night to produce munitions, ambulance wagons, and armoured cars. Bonus payments for piece-rates were introduced 'with excellent results', the productivity of the workers being described as 'three times as great as on time-work'.²⁴ By 1916, the cotton mills had reversed their initial slowdown owing to the reduction in coal supplies, and were 'once more working full time' producing, in addition to an increasing volume of piece-goods, military khaki clothing and blankets, with the demand for labour now exceeding supply.²⁵

The three floors of the new General Post Office, the nerve centre of the now amalgamated postal and telegraphic communications, became one of the Bombay government's key war offices.²⁶ Telegraph workers became subject to working 18-hour shifts which included compulsory overtime.²⁷ Here too sat the Postal Censor and his staff who were authorized to detain any 'suspect literature'; they also went through letters from Bombay students studying in England. Moreover, as the distributing centre for all mail destined for Indian troops engaged on both fronts, a special department was set up to handle this increased volume of correspondence.²⁸

This initially smooth process of militarization was undoubtedly facilitated by the virtually unanimous support for the war from the city's political elite. Throughout July, the eventuality of war had been a hot topic of conversation in political circles, and the

²³*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1918, p. 223; *GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1919, p. 559.

²⁴Burnett-Hurst, pp. 3, 99; *BC*, 27 June 1923.

²⁵*Bombay Confidential Proceedings* 1916, p. 1; *IO, Political and Secret Annual files: L/P&S/11/136*; Chari, pp. 5-6.

²⁶The War also brought the horse conveyancing of postal mail to an end in the city, now replaced by a motorized mail service, the first of its kind in India. *BC*, 2 Oct. 1915.

²⁷*BC*, 20 Nov. 1916.

²⁸*TOI*, 23 Oct. 1914. Letters from Indian soldiers serving on the Western Front were censored by the military authorities in Delhi. *GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings* Aug. 1915, 54; *DCI Reports*, April 1917; *GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings* June 1915, 18.

demand for news led many newspapers to bring out special evening editions. Once India was declared to be 'at war' with Germany, loyalty resolutions were passed by most of the major community organisations in the city.²⁹ Bombay's veteran nationalist father figure, Pherozeshah Mehta, presided over a 'War Meeting' at the Town Hall which was reported as being 'crowded to..capacity'. The audience heard speaker after speaker, nationalist and loyalist, affirm the city's unconditional support for Britain and her allies.³⁰ There were also calls for the setting up of an Indian Defence Force, made up entirely of Indian volunteers, to defend the country's territorial integrity.

Nationalist leaders like Tilak, Jinnah, and Annie Besant, and potential leaders like Gandhi, viewed the war as a 'window of opportunity' for India.³¹ The *Bombay Chronicle* echoed the views of the nationalist press when it asserted that the prospect of Indian and European 'standing shoulder to shoulder' on the field of battle involved 'the assertion of an ethical principle: the common equality and unity of the human race, the denial of which is the greatest danger of our time.'³² Similar considerations prompted the leaders of both the Labour³³ and Suffragette movements in England as well as the African National Congress in South Africa, to support the Allied cause. For colonized

²⁹ Amongst others, the Pathare Prabhu Social Association, the All-India Bhatia Conference, the Mahratta Educational Conference, the Dawoodi Bohras, the Lingayats, the Depressed Classes Mission Society, the Anjuman-I-Islam all passed resolutions of loyalty to 'the King-Emperor' in the days immediately following the outbreak of war. *BC*, 8, 13, 20, 21 August, and 15 and 29 September 1914. *GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings* Nov. 1915, 228.

³⁰ *BC*, 4 and 14 Aug. 1914.

³¹ Tilak addressed a mass meeting at Shantaram's Chawl in which he urged support for Britain and the Allies; Gandhi, who spent the first 4 months of the war in London, on his way back to Bombay from South Africa, presided over a meeting organised by the Indian Volunteer Committee held at the Regent Street Polytechnic; back in India, he actively involved himself in the recruiting campaign. Addressing a meeting in Nadiad, Gujarat, he stated that 'Home Rule without military power was useless, and this was the best opportunity to get it'. His speech was not well received. Jinnah, delivering the welcome address to Gandhi in Bombay on his return in January 1915, stated that '..this war..had brought about a feeling of solidarity and complete unanimity among all classes of Indian communities and enabled them to give practical proofs of their deep and staunch loyalty to the British Government.' *BC*, 26 Oct. 1914; *FR*, (2) June 1918; *TOI*, 16 Jan. 1915.

³² *BC*, 3 Sept. 1914.

³³ Virtually alone amongst European socialist parties, Labour, however, did accomodate an influential pacifist wing.

peoples as much as for the metropolitan working-class and women's movements, participation in the life-and-death struggle that was about to be waged seemed to make strategic sense as a means of validating their claims for political and social equality.

In Bombay, only the *Subodh Patrika*, organ of the social reformist *Prarthana Samaj*, raised a questioning voice about the very morality of war itself. Referring to the influential pacifist movement in England opposing the war, the paper prophetically anticipated 'the enormous sufferings' that the 'present terrible war' would bring in its wake, the result of 'nations having cherished mutual hatred instead of trying to remove mutual misunderstandings'.³⁴

It was during these years that Bombay surpassed the one million population mark, with an additional half a million temporary residents in the city at any particular time.³⁵ While the Bombay government appears to have viewed the maintenance of the city in as healthy a condition as possible as a 'military necessity', it could not undo the overcrowded, disease-prone urban environment produced by decades of anti-social development policies; nor was its cause helped by war-time 'financial retrenchment' and the consequent curtailment of expenditure on urban sanitation.³⁶

In these circumstances, official sanitary policy simply boiled down to funding the Municipal Corporation's anti-malaria campaign, believing soldiers to be particularly susceptible to the disease.³⁷ The municipal campaign centred on the attempted closure of the numerous tanks and wells attached to private houses and places of worship, seen as breeding-grounds for malarial mosquitoes.³⁸ However, in a city suffering from a chronic shortage of water for domestic consumption, such an eradication method was doomed to failure. It also reflected a misguided health priority: malaria contributed a

³⁴*Subodh Patrika*, 30 Aug. 1914. BNNR no. 36, 1914.

³⁵*Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Back Bay Reclamation Scheme* (Government of India, 1926). Part II, Evidence, p. 391.

³⁶GOB *Confidential Proceedings* 1916, p. 189.

³⁷GOB *Financial Proceedings* 1915, part B, p. 76; GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1917, p. 126.

³⁸BMCR 1919-20, part II, p. 106.

very small fraction of the city's epidemiological mortality compared with deaths from respiratory diseases, tuberculosis, and plague.³⁹

Indeed, the sudden spiralling of the city's population during the war years created an easily predictable health crisis. Mortality rates tripled between 1915 and 1919, and increased fatalities from respiratory illnesses were compounded by the re-emergence of cholera which "reached epidemic proportions" towards the end of 1918, and especially, by the world-wide influenza epidemic ironically brought to Bombay by soldiers returning from Europe.⁴⁰ Just on one day, 11 October 1918, influenza accounted for 489 deaths in the city. Once again, death was class-oriented, reflecting the city's uneven spatial environment. The highest number of fatalities (95) were recorded in Byculla in the north, and the lowest (26) in the Fort.⁴¹ In India, the disease would kill 12 million people in the 6 months following the Armistice.⁴²

³⁹This was later pointed out by Geddes in an article in the *Chronicle*. Not all private wells, he argued, necessarily bred mosquitoes. A more potent source were the stagnant pools of water which tended to accumulate in the city during the monsoon months as a result of poor drainage. Moreover, in times of rainfall scarcity, wells provided an indispensable additional supply of water.

Properly maintained tanks also contributed to the health of the city as they tended to cool the air; in turn, exposure to maximum direct sunlight and fresh air gave wells the protection of organically natural disinfectants. Geddes advised that, instead of closure, wells could be kept clean by the use of suitable chemicals while the water should not be allowed to remain stagnant but be drawn often by means of the *Rahat* (Persian Wheel). *BC*, 4 June 1920.

⁴⁰*BMCR* 1919-20, p. xii.

⁴¹*BC*, 12 Oct. 1918.

⁴²The virulent new strain of influenza which originated in a US Army Camp in March 1918 was rapidly propagated by the unprecedented human mobility of the First World War. It developed into the worst pandemic the world had ever known, killing 40 million people, nearly five times as many lives as claimed by the war itself. *Secret History: Killer Flu*. Channel 4 Documentary, 1998.

2. Censorship and Propaganda: Communications, the press, and cinema.

On the outbreak of war control over both people's physical movements, and messages emanating from the diverse network of modern communications, became an urgent priority for both government and army. The passing of the Defence of India Act in early 1915, coupled with subsequent amendments, gave the authorities sweeping powers of censorship and of arrest and detention without trial; rights of free speech were also restricted through simplified powers to prohibit public meetings.⁴³ In June 1917, the Government of India introduced for the first time a general passport system in India.⁴⁴

Delhi advised the Bombay government to use the new powers affecting individual civil liberties sparingly, lest they provided an additional platform for nationalist agitation.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Governor Willingdon, who favoured a stronger line against the gathering Home Rule movement, forbade Abul Kalam Azad from entering the Presidency, played an active part in Annie Besant's internment in 1917, and prohibited Tilak from speaking in public--except under 'approved circumstances'--a year later. In fact, the terms of the new legislation were somewhat harsher than the corresponding Defence of the Realm Act in Britain where detainees still had recourse to a judicial investigation of their cases and the alternative of a jury trial.⁴⁶

Censorship of messages emitted by modern technologies of communication was now under the authority of a "Deputy Chief Censor" based in Simla (the "Chief" sat in London). A military appointment, the Censor exercised authority over submarine, cable, and radio-telegraphic communications which linked India to the rest of the world. By January 1915 he felt confident enough to assert

⁴³N. Gerald Barrier, *Banned. Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India 1907-1947* (Missouri 1974), p. 69.

⁴⁴GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings June 1917, 220-28.

⁴⁵GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings March 1916, 317-25.

⁴⁶BC, 26 Feb. 1917.

I have now..a fairly tight hold over telegraphic traffic all over India which will get tighter every day. No uncensored news regarding naval or military movements of any sort, in and out of India; nothing sensational or seditious or objectionable is accepted or allowed to pass over any wires, Government or railway. All codes and ciphers are also prohibited..⁴⁷

Radio telegrams to and from Britain were immediately suspended, 'except for official government business'.⁴⁸ Just north of Bombay, two wireless stations were installed 'to trace the illicit stations' which 'were believed to exist somewhere along the coast'.⁴⁹ In Bombay itself, a radio-telegram interception unit was set up on Butcher Island to break through cypher telegrams sent by the German ambassador in Turkey to German consuls in Teheran and Isphahan.⁵⁰ The work of this unit appears to have been rather more successful than that of the 'postal appraiser' whose appointment to assist the Postal Censor at the Bombay General Post Office was terminated in June 1916 following his failure to find 'much seditious literature in the mail from the UK passing through the GPO'.⁵¹ All new private residential telephone connections were also suspended while, in contrast, 'extra expenditure' was incurred to connect the residences of CID Inspectors to the central telephone exchange.⁵²

Both civil and military authorities were particularly concerned to regulate the flow of telegraphic news coming into India. The Reuters News Agency, which held a virtual monopoly in the supply of news to the British Empire, had always enjoyed a 'special relationship' with the Government of India.⁵³ Even before the passing of the Defense of India Act, Edward J. Buck, Reuters Indian representative, voluntarily agreed to submit all news telegrams to the Deputy Chief Censor before releasing them

⁴⁷GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Jan. 1915, 105-27.

⁴⁸BC, 5 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁹GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings March 1915, 437-38.

⁵⁰IO, Political and Secret Annual Files: L/P&S/11/91, 1915.

⁵¹GOB Judicial Proceedings 1916, p. 337.

⁵²BC, 25 May 1918; GOB Financial Proceedings 1915, p. 226.

⁵³Milton Israel, *Communications and power : Propaganda and the press in the Indian nationalist struggle, 1920-1947* (Cambridge 1994), p. 100.

internally.⁵⁴ This was in marked contrast to Reuter's frequent complaints to the Press Bureau about the workings of the censorship system in Britain itself.⁵⁵ Buck also impressed upon the colonial administration Reuters' unique capacity to keep India's example of loyalty constantly before the eyes of the Empire and the rest of the world. As a result, in December 1914, Buck was provided with an advance of five thousand rupees (a very large sum) to 'from time to time cook up suitable telegrams for transmission through Reuter to all parts of the British Empire'.⁵⁶

One such "cooked up" telegram read:

*War has united Hindus and Muslims in one great body determined to lay down their lives for Empire and to sacrifice everything for the ultimate victory of England. It has wielded together creeds and classes in common bond of sympathy unheard of in Indian History and, as in time of King's Durbar, has evoked warmest expressions of loyalty and devotion to Sovereign and Crown from Maharaja to poorest peasant. The small section of seditionists about whose activities much was heard prior to the war has receded into the background.*⁵⁷

The use of Reuters suggests the extent to which censorship and propaganda were two sides of the same coin for colonial administrations during the war. While suspecting the Agency of failing to convey to the outside world the evolving complexities of Indian public opinion in relation to the war, the Indian press also complained of Reuters' failure to transmit any substantial news about Indian soldiers back to India. The perceived misinformation about wholly fictitious Russian victories was also regretted,⁵⁸ but most criticized was the withholding of information about the developing Irish situation.⁵⁹ When in April 1918, Reuters reported on Irish nationalist

⁵⁴GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Dec. 1914, 230-31.

⁵⁵Donald Reed, *The Power of News. The History of Reuters 1849-1989* (Oxford 1992), p. 138.

⁵⁶GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Dec. 1914, 230-31.

⁵⁷ibid.

⁵⁸Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1914; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1915, p. 136.

⁵⁹BC, 8 and 24 July 1916.

moves against conscription in the British army, the 'most objectionable passages' were expunged by the Deputy Chief Censor on the advice of the Home Department which urged that '...as little currency as possible should be given in this country to messages of this character about the position in Ireland..'⁶⁰

Responsible to the Deputy Chief Censor were the new Press Advisers whose role, in each of the provinces, was to decide on the suitability of news items for publication in consultation with the local military authorities. Newspapers could only publish, without reference to the Press Adviser, items from Reuters and the Indian Press Agency (already censored in Delhi), telegrams released by the Government of India, and communiques issued by provincial governments supplying the "correct" war news.⁶¹ In Bombay, however, the situation was complicated by the Willingdon administration's reluctance to cede control to the man from Delhi, Major Hingley. Willingdon had written to the Government of India to request that 'a civil officer', ie one of his own officials, be placed in charge of censorship arrangements in the city only to be curtly informed that 'in time of war censorship must be maintained as a military and not as a civilian process'.⁶²

Willingdon's persistence in trying to go it alone immediately created problems for his own administration. The news of the sinking of the German destroyer *Emden* which had been bombarding Madras and was seen as a threat to Bombay itself, was initially censored by the military authorities in Delhi. Journalists, though well aware of the event, were forbidden from publishing it. Willingdon, however, took it upon himself to reveal the destruction of 'the stormy petrel of the Eastern Seas' to an astonished private gathering at the Bombay Yatch Club. This prompted a strong reaction from the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, Benjamin Guy Horniman. In an editorial which marked his political baptism, Horniman asserted that 'we are quite content to deny ourselves on fair terms, but if news that the Censor is sitting on at Delhi

⁶⁰GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings May 1918, 39.

⁶¹GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings Feb. 1915, 29.

⁶²GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Nov. 1914, 49-55.

is to be divulged at private gatherings by persons in high authority, there is an end of the bargain. In future, we propose to exercise our own discretion and risk the consequences.’⁶³

In a bold move, Horniman bypassed the Bombay government and directly took up the matter with the Viceroy’s secretary. He wrote pointing out that the Governor had also acted in a way which had favoured some (Anglo-Indian) newspapers, whose editors had been present at the private function, at the expense of (nationalist) organs such as the *Chronicle*, whose editors were outside the colonial garden-party circuit. He was anxious to cooperate with the authorities in the light of war-time conditions and his paper had, he pointed out, ‘scrupulously complied’ with the terms of the Censorship Ordinance. At the same time, however, he felt that ‘..we should be shown a corresponding amount of consideration seeing what it means to a newspaper day after day to withhold news of public interest. It is very much like telling a shopkeeper that he is not to sell..(his) most important and profitable articles..’⁶⁴

Moreover in Bombay, he complained, the censorship of news was not ‘centralised in any one office’ so that newspapers had no one person they could turn to for guidance. Apart from Major Hingley, ‘there were frequent communications from the Political Department of the Bombay government, while the Commissioner of Police, the General Staff Officer, and others also joined in the business of advising what we should or should not publish..’⁶⁵

The Government of India responded by reasserting the primacy of the Press Adviser who was henceforth to be based within the Political Department of the Bombay government. One result of this episode was that it earned Horniman and the *Chronicle* the undying hostility of Willingdon and his officials; it increased the Bombay government’s belligerence towards the nationalist press, particularly in the light of complaints by other editors about the circulation of Reuters telegrams in private clubs

⁶³BC, 12 Nov. 1914.

⁶⁴GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Jan. 1915, 105-27.

⁶⁵ibid.

frequented by high government officials and the Anglo-Indian elite. This had prompted another rebuke from Delhi to (amongst others) the Bombay government who were reminded of ‘..their responsibility for the strict observance of the rule that these telegrams should not be published’.⁶⁶

Editors like Horniman felt that they were being unjustifiably denied vital information in the public interest on narrow “party political” grounds even though, on the issue of the war itself, their response had been beyond reproach. Indeed, the Annual Report on Indian Papers congratulated the press for grasping ‘..the vital issues at stake with a..remarkable clearness of vision” and for having “..done everything in its power to help Government, especially in the first few critical months of the war’.⁶⁷

Bombay journalists, however, underestimated the demonic nature which a section of the nationalist press had increasingly come to assume in the eyes of the colonial authorities. The press was credited for the growing emergence of a hostile public opinion and, under the terms of the Indian Press Act of 1910, it had easily become the most favoured recipient of surveillance, harassment, and punishment. The Press Act, ‘the child of that reactionary of reactionaries Sir Herbert Risley’⁶⁸ was a powerful piece of intimidatory legislation in the hands of the colonial state. It was effectively designed to secure state control over the production and circulation of printed matter within India as well as over the dissemination of literature from abroad.⁶⁹ Under its terms, newspapers were liable to the “anticipatory penalty” of security deposit. Exemption was only granted if papers were deemed by a police report to be of ‘irreproachable’ character.

Many presses were strangled at birth by this requirement of the ‘heavy tax’ of security. Exemption, moreover, was always under review and could be withdrawn at any time. The Press Act created a wholly interpretive offense of ‘sedition’: proceedings

⁶⁶*GOB Financial Proceedings* 1916, p. 11.

⁶⁷Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1914. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1915, pp. 130, 134.

⁶⁸In the words of Horniman. *GOB Home Special* 204 (A) I, 1919.

⁶⁹*Barrier, Banned..*, pp. 46-47.

could be taken against newspapers deemed to have incited 'public contempt for the Government of British India' as well as 'interference with the maintenance of law and order.' "Incitement" could be produced not only by words but also by 'signs or visible representations' which were likely '..directly or indirectly, whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication or otherwise' to bring about the said situations.⁷⁰ Repeat offenders were liable to a demand for enhanced security and ultimately, to the final sanction of security forfeiture and shut-down. The event of war increased rather than lessened the colonial state's paranoia about the press--its support for the Allied cause notwithstanding--as the "enemy within".

Moreover, the Bombay nationalist press's general support for the war did not of course mean that it was prepared to give the colonial state *carte blanche* in terms of its conduct of internal affairs. There was, to be sure, an initial honeymoon period of about six months following the outbreak of war.⁷¹ However, as the implications of the Defense of India Act became clearer, with such high profile cases as that of the internment of the Ali Brothers, newspapers voiced concerns that it was being utilised to suppress peaceful and legitimate political agitation since any person could now be arrested and detained without the State having to prove its case in a court of law.

There was also resentment that Indians, unlike their government, were not given the freedom to raise the issue of Home Rule and discuss its implications in relation to the promised post-war constitutional reforms.⁷² The press also, of course, echoed popular complaints about war-time hardships, particularly the abnormal rise in prices of food, fuel, and house rents,⁷³ and at the consequences of government spending restrictions

⁷⁰GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings March 1917, 374-75.

⁷¹Writing in 1923 and looking back over the war years, Horniman observed that '..We were prepared to abide by the plea for the suspension of political controversy until it became clear that this was to be a one-sided arrangement. The Bureaucracy ignored it..(while) in England and other parts of the Empire..people were using the opportunity to obtain political concessions and generally advance their interests.' B. G Horniman, "My life in Bombay"; BC, 25 Sept. 1923.

⁷²FR (2) Sept. 1917.

⁷³Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1917; GOB Confidential Proceedings 1918, p. 85.

on sanitation and public health.⁷⁴ The potential conflict flashpoints between press and government were therefore numerous.

Editors and proprietors continued to see the Press Act, locally referred to as 'the Gagging Act',⁷⁵ rather than the new wartime legislation as the prime threat to the existence and well-being of their newspapers.⁷⁶ In December 1915 Horniman seized the opportunity presented by the presence of a large number of reporters in the city covering both the Congress and Muslim League sessions, to set up the first Indian journalists' union, the Press Association of India. This new body identified its objectives as '..protecting the press of the country by all lawful means from arbitrary laws and their administration, as well as from all attempts of the legislature to encroach on its liberty or of the executive authorities to interfere with the free exercise of their calling as journalists..⁷⁷

Fears that the Press Act would be used to further stifle political dissent in the light of the considerably enhanced opportunities inherent in the emergencies of war, were soon realised. In June 1916, following its campaign in favour of 'Home Rule', a demand for security was imposed on Annie Besant's *Young India*. The Press Association immediately convened a protest meeting at the Empire cinema. Nine months later, amid a flurry of new prosecutions, Horniman led a Press Association deputation to the Viceroy to request a repeal of the Press Act.

The delegation pointed out that the conditions of journalistic activity had become 'oppressive in the highest degree' since they were compelled to write '..with one eye always..on the susceptibilities' of the local administration and the police. Moreover, the extraordinarily wide powers which were now in the hands of the Executive and which could be exercised 'without the previous sanction of any judicial authority' gave government a weapon which was 'bound on occasion to be abused'. The deputation

⁷⁴Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1915; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1916, p. 189.

⁷⁵In the words of the *Praja Bandhu*. BNNR no. 37, 1915.

⁷⁶BC, 24 Oct. 1916.

⁷⁷DCI Reports, Jan. 1916.

demanded the restoration of their professional status as journalists and of their 'rights as ordinary citizens' to be tried in a court of law for whatever offenses they might allegedly have committed. The Viceroy, bolstered by the Bombay government's hawkish stance on repeal, rejected these arguments, invoking the continued 'intemperate' criticism of government in these 'difficult times' when the press had to be relied upon to be 'loyal and responsible'.⁷⁸

By mid-1917, the CID had fingered three papers which, it alleged, were 'determined to give Government every possible trouble' even though their attitude to the war and to the Allied cause continued to be irreproachable: the *Chronicle*, *Sandesh*, and *Young India*. A new heading, 'Extremism in Bombay' now emerged in the CID's weekly reports, primarily devoted to combing the contents of papers perceived as "radical".⁷⁹ The Tilakite *Sandesh* was the city's leading Marathi daily, and its criticism of the enhanced police powers under the Defense of India Act had first brought upon it the penalty of a large security deposit in April 1915. When further criticism of the government over food prices in 1918 incurred the forfeiture of the Rs. 1,500 security, the paper had to cease publication.⁸⁰ The Bombay government had achieved their objective without recourse to any wartime legislation.

That the suppression of dissident newspapers was a primarily civilian rather than military initiative is indicated by the contrasting treatment of papers taken to task for alleged infringement of purely war ordinances. In these cases, actual punishment tended to be rare, a pattern consistent with the treatment of the British press under the Defense of the Realm Act. When the *Chronicle* was addressed '..with reference to the publication of news from enemy sources', Horniman was simply requested '..to place the letter of Government before the management of the paper and to communicate to Government the views of the management on the subject..' Similarly, the *Hindusthan*

⁷⁸GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings Sept. 1917, 333-344.

⁷⁹DCI Reports, Sept. 1917.

⁸⁰FR (2) April 1915; GOB Judicial Proceedings 1919, p. 180.

was warned for 'sensational headlines in connection with war news' while even the *Times of India* was admonished for 'revealing troop movements out of Bombay'.⁸¹

Again, in 1917 the *Gujarati* was addressed for 'making very objectionable comments on the situation in Russia' and was given final notice that unless the editor 'gave up publishing such alarmist articles, Government would be constrained to insist on pre-censoring all his articles on the present war'.⁸² In none of these cases however was any punitive action taken under the Defense of India legislation. This was in marked contrast with the enhanced use of the Indian Press Act to intensify the pre-war pattern of newspaper intimidation.

It was predictable that sooner or later, Horniman and the *Bombay Chronicle* would become the targets of the veritable arsenal of repressive legislation now in the hands of the colonial state. In July 1917, the *Chronicle* published a number of letters alleging brutalities by Recruiting Parties and British soldiers billeted at the Dadar Military Labour Camp in the north of the city, against the local working-class population. There had for some weeks been considerable industrial unrest in the north of the city caused by the spiralling cost of living, which was now further fanned by rumours of the behaviour of the military. The issue was taken up and discussed in other papers like *Sandesh* and *Kesari*. The Willingdon administration immediately invoked section 153A of the Indian Penal Code against writings 'likely to promote feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects' together with the DOI articles proscribing any 'hampering of the production of materials required for the prosecution of the war' and 'prejudicing recruiting operations'.⁸³

The editors were served with a DOI Order prohibiting them from opening their columns to any further correspondence and discussion relating to the affair. Moreover, Horniman was requested to disclose the names of his informants. While *Sandesh* complied with the request, Horniman would not give any guarantees and refused to

⁸¹FR (2) June 1915; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1916, pp. 177-78.

⁸²*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1918, p. 80.

⁸³*GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings* Sept. 1917, 333-44.

name names. To the Secretary of the Bombay government he wrote ‘..The Editor of a newspaper, has to consider his responsibility to the public which looks to a responsible journal to publish news and not to suppress it. In cases where events or rumours have produced a state of apprehension in the minds of any section of the public, I think that publicity is helpful and in the public interest.’ He merely offered to insert a paragraph in the paper ‘to the effect that the Commissioner of Police would be glad if anyone who can assist with information would communicate with him’.⁸⁴

It is doubtful whether any investigation of the allegations was ever carried out, and the true facts of the affair never emerged publicly. Nonetheless, the government quietly moved the Dadar Military Camp personnel on to Karachi and ordered a temporary freeze on recruiting operations north of Grant Road. Willingdon considered unleashing the full force of the DOI powers against Horniman--arrest, search of premises, police interrogation, and internment--but vigorous public protests in the city appear to have deterred any such action on the part of the local colonial state.⁸⁵ In the end, it was back to the Press Act, the *Chronicle* being made subject to an enhanced security demand of two thousand rupees.⁸⁶

Indeed the elusive narratives of popular rumour seem to have posed particular problems for the Bombay government throughout the war years. These oral tales which circulated primarily in the bazaars of the city operated of course outside the transparent circuits of either colonial or nationalist discourse. They could neither be effectively traced nor assigned to individuals or organisations and were therefore beyond the reach of colonial censorship and control. At the same time bazaar rumours could not simply be dismissed as “false” as they provided a graphic expression of urban popular opinion which the authorities had to contend with. Unchecked rumours could, moreover, propagate and gain a wider hearing. For this reason they always featured prominently in

⁸⁴ibid.

⁸⁵GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings Jan. 1918, 242; GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings Feb. 1918, 35; GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings April 1918, 20.

⁸⁶GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings Sept. 1917 and Jan. 1918; GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings Jan. 1918.

the *Fortnightly Reports* while the *Times of India* devoted many a critical editorial to 'the gossips of the bazaar'.⁸⁷

The authorities were particularly concerned to neutralize 'harmful rumours' well aware that in the popular discourse of "gossip", British and Allied military strength tended to be consistently denigrated in the bazaars.⁸⁸ The *sarkar* itself appears to have been generally cast in the role of an untrustworthy figure of authority, engaged in various subterfuges to conceal how badly things were going for Britain and inconsiderate to popular wartime difficulties. In February 1915, anxieties about the state of popular morale led the Army to order several seaplane flights over Bombay Harbour. The *Fortnightly* reporter was sanguine in the belief that '...a good effect has been produced in so far as their appearance has tended to convince people that Germany is not the only nation which possesses flying machines'.⁸⁹ In contrast, the action taken, in early 1917 of prohibiting women and children from leaving Bombay by sea fuelled rumours of imminent raids by German submarines and destroyers.⁹⁰

When in early 1918 shortages in the availability of metal led to the issuing of the one-rupee note, rumours immediately began circulating that the government was '...taking all the silver out of the country and flooding it with notes' and that even the 'copper paise was going to be replaced by cardboard pieces'.⁹¹ For itinerant groups of the urban poor, hawkers, water-carriers, vegetable and fruit sellers, milkmen, the solid feel of the rupee metal coin tied up in the corners of their *dhotis*, was reassuringly substantial. In contrast, the paper note, light and flimsy, had all the appearances of a cheap con-trick.⁹² Indeed the Bombay government feared at the time that '...the one-rupee note had done more to help German propaganda..than even the campaign of sedition inaugurated and carried out under Home Rule or extremist auspices.'⁹³ It did

⁸⁷*TOI*, 18 Nov. 1914.

⁸⁸*FR* (1) Nov. 1915.

⁸⁹*FR* (1) Feb. 1915.

⁹⁰*FR* (2) Feb. 1917.

⁹¹*DCI Reports*, May 1918.

⁹²*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1917, p. 7.

⁹³*DCI Reports*, May 1918.

not however appear to realise that it was implicitly also admitting its own failure in the realm of communication.

Rumours were disruptive intrusions into the colonial discourse of war, functioning as a means of evoking popular fears and feelings about worsening social conditions. Never wholly autonomous from the various channels of information--formal and informal--circulating in the city, they represented an intuitive resistance to official propaganda sometimes acquiring, for this very reason, an uncanny ability to forecast actual happenings. 'Bazaar rumour' was identified as the initial source of a story circulating in the city in May 1917, that Russia had concluded a separate peace with Germany.⁹⁴ This 'rumour' would actually become fact six months later. The authorities were always on their guard against such anonymously influential tales and affirmed that the people of Bombay and of other large cities were '..much more influenced by adverse rumours than the rural population'.⁹⁵ This in itself, however, reveals the existence of a popular undercurrent of mistrust and hostility which, feeding off the diverse channels of information circulating in the modern city, found expression in alternative constructions of "news" beyond the control of government.

Existing channels of official propaganda had little effect on urban popular *mentalites*. The *Fauji Akhbar* war bulletin, issued in Marathi and Gujarati as from April 1915 to be read aloud on street corners 'as a means of circulating reliable war news among the natives' had virtually no impact.⁹⁶ In this respect, the new technology of the cinema offered at least the promise of reaching a wider audience, including the rural masses. Shortly after the outbreak of war, the Home Ministry's Department of Information in London set up a Cinema Branch which became responsible for the distribution of war films to India. The Department was 'most anxious to act in the closest harmony with the India Office and the Government of India'. Its Director, John Buchan, emphasised the importance of the new medium as a means of propaganda:

⁹⁴FR (1) May 1917.

⁹⁵GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings March 1916, 671-76.

⁹⁶GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings March 1915, 5.

‘The Department of Information’, he wrote to Delhi, ‘considers that the subject is one peculiarly deserving of the consideration of the Government of India and urges that a population which cannot read or write is the more liable to suggestion through the eye.’⁹⁷

The colonial state, however, had no tradition of active involvement in the provision or promotion of cinema, a technology and an industry about which it still effectively knew very little. So far, its only involvement with the medium was a concern to ensure that ‘proper censorship arrangements’ were in place to deal with ‘objectionable’ films, defined as those either inimical to British rule or, more particularly at this stage, those portraying “Western culture” in a negative light.⁹⁸ In Bombay city, the centre of the war effort as well as the home of cinema in India, the distribution and exhibition of films was in the hands of private entrepreneurs, British as well as Indian, whose primary objective was profit-making. This meant the segregation of audiences on a class basis, with only an elite circuit of cinemas in the Fort showing the most select Western films which were patronized by the educated classes. These audiences were by and large representative of the social groups who strongly favoured India’s participation in the conflict. Within days of the declaration of war, these cinemas began advertising ‘stirring patriotic military dramas’ which were certain to ‘appeal to every patriotic citizen’.⁹⁹

Cinemas such as the Gaiety, the America-India, and the Imperial began showing documentary war films such as *England Expects*, *A Soldier’s Duty*, and *England Prepared*, as part of their regular daily programmes. Audiences applauded the entrance of British troops and all shows closed with the ritual singing of “God Save the

⁹⁷GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Feb. 1918, 148-59.

⁹⁸Many American films, in particular, were perceived as being in poor taste. Hence, the first major piece of cinema legislation, the 1918 Cinematograph Act, was premised on the view that India was becoming ‘..the dumping ground for the cheap, low and vulgar type of objectionable films rejected elsewhere’. Also under consideration was censorship of cinema posters in large cities, described as being ‘..disgraceful from an aesthetic or moral point of view..’ GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings May 1918, 595-604; GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings March 1915, 263-71.

⁹⁹BC, 24 Oct.1914.

King.”¹⁰⁰ The most exclusive, the Excelsior, soon introduced Pathe’s ‘Weekly War Gazette’ and informed its patrons that ‘..by the Cinema alone’ was it ‘possible to be brought into close touch’ with ‘..the most gigantic struggle that the world has ever seen’.¹⁰¹ A few days later, the same cinema was able to announce a major coup: ‘Actual Fighting Films-*The British Navy At Antwerp* and *The Indian Troops In France.*’

These were shown alongside the main feature, *England’s Menace*, a ‘war drama’ (a new genre), which was billed as ‘a magnificent film showing up the German spy system in England. Splendid foreign naval scenes. Thrilling motor cycle incidents. The danger of private wireless installations.’¹⁰²

On this and other occasions, owing to ‘..the great expense entailed in securing these films’, the theatre raised its admission prices on its most expensive seats, rightly confident in its clientele’s ability to pay the extra cost.¹⁰³ The Excelsior also pioneered the practice of patriotic cinema advertising:

*WHY NOT SEE BRITISH FILMS!!--TWO LITTLE BRITONS by the London Film Co. Ltd and CHARLES CHAPLIN! ANOTHER BRITISHER!! in “THE ROUNDERS.”*¹⁰⁴

By the summer of 1916, however, the recruitment needs of the British Army drew the colonial state into exploring ways of using cinema to ‘bring the war home to the people’ which meant reaching out beyond the select theatres of south Bombay ‘..frequented by Europeans or the higher Indian classes only..’¹⁰⁵ The military authorities were targetting the labouring classes in the north of the city as well as in the mofussil and both central and provincial governments now considered the case of having ‘special Indian films’ produced and exhibited more strategically. They also

¹⁰⁰BC, 11 Sept.1914.

¹⁰¹BC, 31 Oct.1914.

¹⁰²TOI, 10 Nov.1914.

¹⁰³BC, 12 Nov.1914.

¹⁰⁴BC, 16 Oct.1915.

¹⁰⁵GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Feb. 1918, 148-59.

realised that this would necessitate a departure from dominant economic norms as such a project could not be accomplished 'on a commercial basis'.¹⁰⁶ The Bombay government began taking an active interest in the work of a locally-based company, Vernon and Co. who were pioneering the production of a number of topical films of local interest.

Vernon's first production, in early 1917, was a documentary in aid of the local war effort, *The Sick and Wounded in Bombay*, '..a complete pictorial record of the arrangements for treating wounded British and Indian troops from the moment they arrive here on a hospital ship until they are sent away either to a hill station or to England to recuperate.'¹⁰⁷ This was followed by another "first" on life in the city after dark, *Bombay By Night*.¹⁰⁸ Although these films were shown at the Coronation in Girgaum, they still primarily attracted an elite audience. Like Edward J. Buck at Reuters, however, Vernon were only too keen to offer their services to the colonial state and to reach a mutually beneficial "patriotic" arrangement with the Bombay government.

The latter were very keen to strike a deal with the aim of facilitating local recruiting operations, but the final decision rested with the Government of India. As the war entered its fourth year, however, Delhi was under increasing pressure from the India Office to 'practice economy in every possible direction'.¹⁰⁹ In an attempt to break through the colonial state's indecision, Vernon forwarded to the Secretary to the Government of India a detailed and practical plan of action, couched in the new language of advertising: '..At present there is no means of bringing home to the average Indian matters essential to his individual welfare..he thus falls..victim to the sedition monger and can..never see the right side of the question..Why not consider the claims of the Kinematograph which can mould his ideas?'

¹⁰⁶ibid.

¹⁰⁷BC, 28 April 1917.

¹⁰⁸BC, 12 May 1917.

¹⁰⁹GOB *Financial Proceedings* 1918, p. 385.

What reads as a veritable paean of self-publicity then went on to enumerate a list of colonial concerns which films produced by the Company would help solve. Featured at the top of the list were 'Home Rule Agitation' and 'War Recruitment for both combatant and non-combatant forces' followed by other "problems" such as public health, agriculture, and investment. The following is an extract from what was clearly intended as the most persuasive part of the document--a lengthy "Synopsis for the Recruiting Film":

Show some Recruits (young) marching with Recruiting Sargeant to the Recruiting Office, a Poster should be hanging up where they meet, and also at Recruiting Office (with a view to familiarising the Poster) and money being given to them.

Show the hut containing the usual Paraphernalia of cooking pots, the village Pig, a Goat, and the Byle (sic) stabled in the House--then the Recruit's expression of surprise when he sees a Model Barrack Room and its orderliness and cleanliness.

Show him discarding his dirty Dhotie and Coat and receiving his Rifle, Khaki and fine boots the like of which he has never worn before.

Now show recruits undergoing training. Show Cavalry Manoeuvres. Artillery at Practice--building a Pontoon.

Show him drawing his rations and feeding on better food than he has ever had before.

Show him at Games and Polo and Party swanking through the Bazaar carrying all before him--here the glad eye from a couple of Damsels would appeal to the Don Juan spirit in most of their manly bosoms, the Charmers spurn the attention of a Civilian but are visibly attracted by the Soldiers..¹¹⁰

Vernon did however warn of a 'heavy' initial outlay on production costs though they were willing to '..furnish estimates for a Programme of Films which it would be necessary to produce'. In the end, this turned out to be the clinching factor in the decision over the issue. Under unprecedented financial accountability to the India Office, the Government of India would not, in the end, release funds to be spent on a

¹¹⁰GOI Home Pol.(A), Feb. 1918, 148-59.

product whose possibilities they had not as yet quite grasped. Vernon's bid failed because it involved spending money, coupled with the fact that it was probably too imaginative for the conservative mind-set of colonial officialdom. Moreover, the immediate issue of the recruitment of more Indian soldiers fell by the wayside when the war came to an end in November 1918.

3. Price rises, war profits, and popular discontent.

On 4 August, the day of Britain's declaration of war on Germany, a bag of flour was selling for Rs.13 in Bombay city. Within a few days, it had gone up to Rs.15.¹¹¹ Even more spectacularly, a packet of sugar increased by over 50 percent, from Rs.10 to Rs.16, while tinned provisions of various kinds doubled in price.¹¹² Meat also rose by about 6 annas a pound while the cost of more basic items of popular consumption such as rice and potatoes immediately spiralled.

A city characterized by high levels of poverty rapidly descended into a state of panic. While the increases drastically affected popular consumption of even the most basic food necessities, the well-to-do attempted to purchase several months' supplies in the belief that stocks were about to run out.¹¹³ Meanwhile, newspapers received letters of complaint alleging that shopkeepers were refusing to serve customers unless they agreed to '..pay high prices without complaining'.¹¹⁴

In view of the immediate rise in freight and insurance rates, the Bombay Collector of Customs had allowed a 'reasonable' increase to shopkeepers on imported goods.¹¹⁵ The Bombay government, however, soon felt that retailers had taken undue advantage and fearing food riots, issued a notification that the basic necessities of life should not be sold above certain prices, which it would itself fix in consultation with a Committee of eminent citizens.¹¹⁶

Through the streets of the city, a *bataki* was beaten, proclaiming that anyone who raised their prices above the fixed level would be subject to prosecution.¹¹⁷ Willingdon was congratulated by the Viceroy for having '..given a lead to other local Governments' on this issue, especially as there was no '..justifiable reason for an enhancement of the

¹¹¹TOI, 14 Aug.1914.

¹¹²BC, 7 Aug.1914.

¹¹³BMCR 1914-15, part I, p. 11.

¹¹⁴TOI, 15 Aug.1914.

¹¹⁵TOI, 23 Oct.1914.

¹¹⁶BMCR 1914-15, part I, p. 11.

¹¹⁷TOI, 23 Oct. 1914.

prices of the necessities of life for the poorer classes'.¹¹⁸ The dominant commercial class, however, was immediately alarmed, the *Times of India* voicing the Anglo-Indian elite's concern that 'the regulation of prices beyond those fixed by supply and demand is a dangerous thing and very likely to defeat its own object.'¹¹⁹

Evidence from the popular market-place, however, suggests the ineffectiveness of the government order. Mill-hands meeting at Jacob's Circle compared prices charged by Bania food grain retailers for cereals and pulses with those at which the same items were available at the two cheap grain shops which had been established by the Municipality within the premises of a few of the mills. They found that the Banias were charging three annas more--9 compared to 6 for the same quantity--well in excess of the price fixed by the authorities. They had also observed the superior quality of the mill shops' grain and demanded the setting up of shops in all the mills of the city which might also compel retail dealers to reduce their prices.¹²⁰

Moreover, in addition to the unheralded rise in prices, the war also confronted the urban working classes with an immediate breakdown of their customary method of obtaining goods. The cotton textile bosses' practice of withholding 6-8 weeks' wages in arrears meant that the mill-hands were permanently in a state of chronic indebtedness to Marwari and Pathan moneylenders, and were generally compelled to purchase food and other basic provisions on credit from Bania and other petty shopkeepers. With the outbreak of war, many shopkeepers now refused to provide goods on credit.¹²¹

Moreover, the exodus from the city of a large number of Marwari money-lenders who feared an imminent attack from the *Emden*, further added to the mill-hands' problems, while rents, too, immediately shot up.¹²² Young labour organisations such as the *Kamgar Hitvardhak Sabha* urged the Bombay government to exercise strong

¹¹⁸Hardinge to Willingdon, 10 Aug. 1914. *Willingdon Papers*.

¹¹⁹*TOI*, 30 Sept. 1914.

¹²⁰*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1916, p. 3.

¹²¹*BC*, 27 Aug. 1914 and 12 May 1916.

¹²²*TOI*, 16 Nov. 1914; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* (General Dept.) March 1916.

pressure on large employers of labour to set up cheap stores that would provide workers' with the basic necessities of life.¹²³

The outbreak of war also led to a large number of railway workers and lower-grade clerks, employed by some of the city's largest private firms, being immediately laid off.¹²⁴ In September, a number of cotton mills such as Greaves Cotton & Co. introduced short-time working which resulted in a substantial reduction in mill hands' wages. The following month, the workers informed management that they would withdraw their labour unless they were given guarantees of at least twenty-two days' work and a restoration of their September wages in full.

When management responded by stating that '..working the mills full-time was not profitable under present conditions', the mill hands resolved on a day of action: A crowd of men, women, and children marched from Parel to the Mill Agents' offices in Forbes Street, Fort. On the streets, they stated their grievances to curious citizens, showing for the first time perhaps, an appreciation of the importance of cultivating public opinion: under present conditions, eighteen days' work did not provide them with living wages. A deputation of mill hands was granted an interview by the Agents, and eventually agreement was reached on the September wages though not on short-time work.¹²⁵

In many respects, this situation was not unique to Bombay. In the predominantly working-class East End of London, for instance, food prices rose by sixteen percent by the end of the first week of war alone, causing high levels of economic hardship to the urban poor.¹²⁶ There were, of course, stronger demands from trade unionists and socialists for stringent government price controls than in Bombay though paradoxically, it was the Bombay government which acted well before the Home authorities on the issue of price control. Crucially, however, the Willingdon administration failed to set up

¹²³BC, 27 Aug. 1914.

¹²⁴FR (1) Sept. 1914.

¹²⁵TOI, 15 Oct. 1914.

¹²⁶Julia Bush, *Behind The Lines: East End Labour 1914-1919* (London 1984), pp. 39-40.

any effective mechanisms to monitor and enforce price levels, nor was it prepared to intervene in relation to food shortages and the non-obtention of goods which rapidly became the more important issues for the working classes.

War conditions do, of course, invariably lead to a substantial reduction in civilian consumption in so far as important sectors of economic production are redirected to serve military requirements. This was the case as much in London as in Bombay. However, one crucial difference in the experience of war-time sacrifices appears to have been in the contrasting levels of sacrifice-sharing between classes in the two cities.

In Britain, the government was initially reluctant to move on price controls. In London's East End, food prices had by December 1915 climbed to 46 percent above their August 1914 level, surpassing 100 percent by early 1918. However, a wide range of popular organisations--local trades' councils, the Co-Operative Movement, the recently formed War Emergency Workers National Committee, labour newspapers such as the *Daily Herald*--urged workers to take militant action in defense of their living standards while continuing to demand stronger government price controls.¹²⁷ The spring of 1915 saw a massive wave of strikes against rising prices which culminated in demands for higher wages. As the East End was one of the centres of food and armaments' production, industrial militancy seemed to pose a serious threat to the war effort.

The government encouraged employers to concede wage rises: Tate's Sugar Refinery workers, for instance, obtained an immediate twelve and a half percent rise. Although the July 1915 Munitions of War Act rendered strikes in the munitions industries illegal, workers received, in return, guarantees that wage levels would be maintained in the face of cost of living increases, and that profits would be restricted.

As prices continued to escalate, food shortages and rationing had become common by 1917. Only then did the government move to impose the stringent price controls which socialists had been demanding from the early days of the conflict. Local food

¹²⁷ibid., pp. 39, 43-44.

control committees were set up to enforce the new regulations on prices and distribution and crucially, the labour movement undertook to shadow the official committees by maintaining its own independent Food Vigilance Committees in several parts of the East End. This task was rendered somewhat easier by the fact that by 1918, there were eighty percent more trade unionists in East London than there were in 1914.¹²⁸

In London, direct pressure from the popular classes whose local organisations were gaining in strength and militancy, compelled increasing government intervention to limit the decline in workers' living standards. The British State, particularly during the crisis years of 1916-18, appears to have perceived the advantages of a higher degree of internal social cohesion in the interests of war efficiency. It thus increasingly intervened in labour issues, acting as mediator between capital and labour. The Colonial State, on the other hand, had somewhat different priorities. Its main purpose was to obtain men, materials, foodstuffs, and supplies as rapidly and as cheaply as possible from its Indian colony. Indeed, the Government of India's Army Department became both a substantial and a privileged purchaser and consumer of Indian produce and goods. Moreover, the war massively reinforced the prevailing tendency for both internal and external demand to increase at a faster rate than the production of foodgrains.¹²⁹

Jowari and *Bajri* cereal grains were essential items of food consumption for the working classes in Bombay. As the city's population grew, deficiencies in supply from the Deccan were ordinarily met by inter-provincial imports from Panjab. Throughout the war years, however, the colonial government restricted inter-provincial grain movements so as to maintain its own privileged consumer position in the market. Indeed, by 1918 it had purchased forty million pounds sterling worth of Panjabi

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 112, 43, 83, 103.

¹²⁹K. L Dutta, *Report on the Enquiry into the rise of prices in India* (Delhi 1914), p. 61.

foodgrains, causing a depletion in stocks which largely contributed to the doubling in the price of cereals in Bombay city.¹³⁰

A similar pattern existed in the availability of rice, another basic item of popular consumption. Here again the city experienced shortages throughout this period which were generally attributed both to the spectacular increase in freight rates and to the government's willingness to pay above-the-odds prices for Burma rice.¹³¹ In effect, the colonial state was engaged in a situation of unequal competition with the urban popular classes over the obtention of basic food resources.

As in Britain, food shortages created an ideal climate for the growth of speculation and profiteering. Large wholesale operators such as the grain and cloth merchants, anticipating the arrival of ever more desperate times, began to hoard supplies in the expectation of making huge profits, offering an example which many smaller retailers invariably found hard to resist.¹³² Indeed, merchants and traders made 'immense money' both from wartime speculation in scarce commodities, and from trading in strategic raw materials required by the military.¹³³ It was this rapid accession to wealth of many "middling" merchants that would fuel a new postwar ambition to become politically influential via the nationalist movement.

War thus intensified the arbitrariness of colonial takings from India, while also creating new opportunities for Bombay's dominant class factions. While merchants were accumulating unprecedented wealth, the setting up of the Indian Munitions Board, combined with the curtailment of imported cotton articles, provided industrialists with new levers for the expansion of production. As a result, the war years witnessed a redistribution of wealth in favour of the dominant class in Bombay city.¹³⁴

¹³⁰A. D. D Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics. Rising Nationalism and a Modernising Economy in Bombay, 1918-1933* (Delhi 1978), p. 32; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1919, p. 32; *BC*, 25 July 1919.

¹³¹The decrease in commercial shipping pushed up freight rates from 12 shillings per ton in 1914 to 325 shillings in 1917. Gordon, p. 33; *FR* (1) Feb. 1918.

¹³²*FR* (1) Aug. 1915.

¹³³*DCI* Reports, Dec. 1917.

¹³⁴*BC*, 19 Dec. 1918.

The Bombay cotton textile industry now became a primary source for military khaki clothes, as well as developing into the effective supplier of markets in the Middle East and East Africa, previously the preserve of European manufacturers. By mid-1916, short-time working in the cotton mills had come to an end. Industrialists' profits rose to unprecedented levels not only as a result of the increased volume of production and of the abnormally high price of raw cotton (four times its pre-war level by 1917), but through a policy of keeping workers' wage rises well below the level of inflation.¹³⁵ Dividends paid to shareholders rose from 6 percent in 1914 to over 30 percent in 1917 while in 1920, sixteen mills were able to pay 100 percent or more on all shares; in contrast, during the first three years of the war the index of mill workers' real wages fell by fourteen points.¹³⁶

A substantial proportion of the war profits made by industrialists and merchants went into land transactions: into the acquisition, both of land developed for residential purposes by the Improvement Trust, and of undeveloped land which was bought and kept idle. In 1917, the Trust reported that 'all previous records' had been beaten in terms of the 'number and value of plots disposed of', largely as a result of 'the accumulation of war profits in Bombay'.¹³⁷ At the same time, speculative purchases led to the spiralling of land values: the price of a square yard of land in Malabar Hill, for instance, rose from between Rs. 8-15 in 1916 to Rs.109 in 1919; even the northern suburbs witnessed a staggering increase, the price of an acre shooting up from between Rs.200-1500 to Rs.5000-25,000 during the same period.¹³⁸ Rents followed this upward movement, more than doubling on average over the war years,¹³⁹ while

¹³⁵Chari, pp. 5-7; Chandavarkar, *The Origins...*, p. 251.

¹³⁶Judith Brown, *War and the Colonial Relationship. Britain, India and the War of 1914-18* in M. R. D Foot (ed.), *War and Society* (London 1973), p. 98; Dick Kooiman, *Bombay Communists and the 1924 Textile Strike* in *EPW* vol. xv (19 July 1980), p. 1224. Gordon, p. 32.

¹³⁷*BITR* 1917, p. 1.

¹³⁸Chari, p. 13.

¹³⁹The official view from the Department of Statistics, that rents had only increased by an average of 18 percent in the city, was regarded as a gross underestimation. *BC*, 22 May 1918.

prospects for both cheap house-building and affordable suburban settlement received a massive setback.

The colonial state was thus able to obtain its wartime requirements and at the same time provide new profitable ventures for the dominant merchant and industrial class factions. Indeed, the relationship between the colonial authorities and the dominant urban class grew even closer as a result of Britain's deteriorating financial position over the war period. It was the Bombay capitalists' enthusiastic response to the various 'War Loans'--voluntary payments by India into the British war exchequer amounting to one and a half thousand million pounds sterling--which ensured their success between 1915 and 1918. In this situation, the Bombay government was not particularly inclined to intervene with the city's industrialists on behalf of the textile workers, in spite of its periodic formal denunciations of mill-owners' lack of social conscience.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, the Bombay government itself became, during this period, one of the city's largest employers, following a high number of 'war appointments'.¹⁴¹ As a major player in the field, it also had a vested interest in not encouraging wage rises for fear of their effect on its own employees. A continued adherence to *laissez faire* economics, coupled with wartime exigencies and constant pressure from the government of India for cuts in public expenditure, dictated a general policy of low wages, intensified work regimes, and social non-intervention. As a result, wages fell further and further behind prices, obliterating the small margin between bare subsistence and destitution for the majority of urban workers. Escalating food prices, rises in basic items of clothing, as well as in fuel and house rents, all contributed to deepening social distress.

Between 1914 and 1917, the lowest priced *jowari* and *bajri* cereal grains rose by 300 percent, potatoes by 150 percent, sugar by 120 percent, rice, milk, and salt by 100 percent, kerosine oil by 87 percent, onions by 83 percent, and ghee by 71 percent.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Gordon, p. 23; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1919, p. 35.

¹⁴¹*GOB Financial Proceedings* 1917, p. 551.

¹⁴²*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1919, p. 32; *BC*, 8 Oct. 1917 and 25 June 1919.

During the same period, average wages in the city rose by under 50 percent. In the cotton textile industry, real wages, as measured by their commodity purchasing power, fell from an index of 56 (1934=100] to 42, their lowest point since the turn of the century.¹⁴³

Little, moreover, was done to meet the popular demand for cheap grain shops. By 1917, there were only twelve such shops throughout the city, all run by the Municipality, out of which nine were themselves found to be engaged in profiteering practices!¹⁴⁴ According to a survey carried out by the *Journal of the Indian Economic Society*, the cost of living between 1914-18, taking the Bombay median family of four as the basic unit, rose 150 percent in the case of mill hands and labourers, 103 percent in the case of artisans, and 85 percent in the case of clerks.¹⁴⁵

This process of increasing pauperisation was, moreover, not limited to unskilled industrial and transport workers--mill-hands, labourers, railway workers; it was now invading the world of skilled labour, particularly the various categories of clerks employed in government, municipal, post and telegraph, tramway, and railway offices, and affecting even the generally higher-grade European personnel.

In July 1916 Henry Barton, general secretary of the Indian Telegraph Association, a body entirely made up of European staff, was arrested and interned under the DOI Act for ‘..creating discontent and organising agitation among the employees of the Telegraph Department’.¹⁴⁶ Besides the rise in the cost of living, the strategically-key Bombay telegraph staff were increasingly bitter about issues such as compulsory overtime, inadequate meal breaks, and Sunday working.¹⁴⁷ In October 1918, their postal colleagues sent a desperate telegram to the Viceroy’s Secretary pleading for financial assistance on the grounds that their families faced imminent starvation owing

¹⁴³ Gordon, pp. 257, 32.

¹⁴⁴ *BMCR* 1916-17, p. xv.

¹⁴⁵ Reported in *BC*, 25 June 1919.

¹⁴⁶ *DCI* Reports, July 1916.

¹⁴⁷ *BC*, 20 Nov. 1916.

to the 'irresistible onslaught of high prices' and the local colonial state's failure to sanction any war relief.¹⁴⁸

Indeed the last eighteen months of the war saw an escalating wave of social unrest and strikes in Bombay city which was to culminate in the mass general strike of 1919. Sixty-one strikes broke out in 1918 compared to just one in 1915.¹⁴⁹ Between June and August 1917, a strike by virtually all grades of GIP railway workers severely disrupted rail services. Mill-hands' unrest over the Dadar Military Camp affair in July was partly fuelled by popular anger at recruiting parties' increasing resort to physical intimidation and the taking of bribes from would-be recruits.¹⁵⁰ In the Bombay hinterland recruiting parties now often came under physical attack as the earlier enthusiasm for joining up gave way to resentment and indignation over their methods.¹⁵¹ In the city itself, an attempted official inquiry into the social and economic conditions of industrial workers living in Parel had to be abandoned when the investigators were mistaken for army recruiting personnel and 'roughly handled'. Significantly, Marathi leaflets distributed by the Social Service League which attempted to explain the objectives of the inquiry had no effect at all.¹⁵²

In September, it was the turn of postmen to walk out over an alleged broken promise of higher wages, the start of a long drawn out six-months' strike which greatly alarmed the authorities. On the night of 24 January 1918, groups of mill-hands and railway workers joined in the looting of one hundred and fifteen shops in the Parel-Matunga area. They raided grain and cloth shops as well as wood depots belonging to Marwaris and Baniyas, destroying the owners' personal effects and account books in the process. Both Police and CID sources explained the riots as the result of growing

¹⁴⁸BC, 23 Oct. 1918.

¹⁴⁹Burnett-Hurst, p. 146.

¹⁵⁰FRs (2) March and (2) Sept. 1916; *GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings* Sept. 1917.

¹⁵¹In July 1918, Kolis attacked Recruiting Parties at Akola in Ahmednagar district, killing the Mamlatdar of Akola. *DCI Reports*, August 1918.

¹⁵²Burnett-Hurst, pp. 123-24.

popular anger ‘..at the exorbitant prices being asked by shopkeepers for food and commodities of all kinds’.¹⁵³

This 24-hour upheaval which posed the police serious problems belatedly stirred the Bombay government into action, though what followed were little more than measures designed to restore and preserve civil order. The Defense of India Act was invoked to sanction the double appointment of a ‘Controller of Prices’ and a ‘Food Commissioner’, together with the issuing of licences to control traders. However, this merely had the effect of driving commodities off the market altogether rather than making distribution fairer. Speculation and profiteering continued to flourish, ‘sanctioned by the privileges and licenses issued in the name of Government’.¹⁵⁴

Only in June 1918 was a Rent Bill introduced: this was a measure designed to limit the increase of rents in working-class accommodation (calculated to be premises offered at under Rs.20 a month) to 10 percent above the levels of January 1915. Instead, it had a diametrically opposite effect: tenants, unaware of their new rights under the law, were frequently intimidated by landlords into paying increases of between 50 and 100 percent. In other cases, landlords simply took their premises off the housing market rather than rent them unprofitably.¹⁵⁵ The Rent Act also provided a further incentive for the Improvement Trust to move away from working-class housing provision towards more profitable rental opportunities; in some cases it now charged rents ‘5-6 times those at which the same plots had been let in January 1916’.¹⁵⁶ ‘..The people are powerless, the Controller is powerless, even Government are powerless, only those

¹⁵³*Annual Report of the Bombay city police* 1918, p. 24; *DCI Reports*, Feb. 1918.

¹⁵⁴*YI*, 16 April 1919; *BNNR* no. 16, 1919. Gordon, pp. 34-36.

¹⁵⁵Burnett-Hurst, pp. 22-23; *BC*, 27 July 1918; Chandavarkar, *The Origins...*, p. 183. A tenant of Hanuman Buildings on Lamington Road wrote to the *Chronicle*, pointing out that ‘..rabid capitalism can find a hundred and one other ways of harrassing men of ordinary means in spite of the protection of the Rent Act. It is a matter of common knowledge that this Act leaves a grabbing landlord free to get premises vacated on plea of repairs and to charge additional rent to meet such costs.’ *BC*, 10 Jan. 1921. Landlords also responded to tenants’ refusal to pay enhanced rents by shutting off water pumps, thus depriving the upper floors of rented buildings of water. *BC*, 18 June 1918.

¹⁵⁶*BC*, 8 June 1921.

who plunder the people on every pretext are powerful', exclaimed in exasperation the usually moderate *Rast Gofar*.¹⁵⁷

Indeed, when the Bombay government finally sanctioned, in June 1918, special war allowances to all its 'low-paid' employees and 'menials' (sweepers and *hamals*), this provoked a wave of demands for similar treatment from various groups of skilled workers. Besides the clerks of the Post and Telegraph Department, administrative employees of the BB&CI Railway and telegraph signallers at all the main stations in the Presidency also put in their bids. The city's postmen also joined in the movement, threatening a return to strike action if they were denied the allowance.¹⁵⁸

The local state's moves to support low income groups tended to follow a regular pattern: what were sanctioned were bonuses and special allowances rather than wage increases, and the groups that benefitted were primarily government employees whose functions were of strategic importance to both the war effort and the maintenance of civil order. By far the chief beneficiaries were the already privileged city police force, the only group in the city to secure additional accommodation at public expense during the war as well as foodgrain, rent, and travelling allowances. Watchmen and *chaukidars* guarding rail stations and port stores, also obtained foodgrain and house rent allowances.¹⁵⁹

What emerges from the general trend of Bombay government initiatives is a concern to limit civilian consumption without interventionist compensatory measures to ensure either minimum living wages or popular access to basic foodstuffs. When the War Purposes Board was set up in 1917, one of its main objectives was to encourage 'economy in consumption and use of locally produced articles'--already a way of life with the working classes!¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷*Rast Gofar*, 25 July 1918. *BNNR* no. 26, 1918.

¹⁵⁸*FR* (2) July 1918.

¹⁵⁹*GOB Financial Proceedings* 1917, p. 889; *ibid.*, 1918, pp. 2, 114, 172; *ibid.*, 1919, p. 269.

¹⁶⁰*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1918, p. 223.

By this time, provincial budgets were under intense scrutiny from the Government of India to ensure that ‘..any measure involving increased expenditure’ be based purely on ‘its imperative and immediate necessity or its immediately remunerative character’.¹⁶¹ As a result, the substantial surpluses accumulated by Bombay government budgets throughout the war years were held in reserve at the potential disposition of the Government of India,¹⁶² while urgent local priorities in terms of housing, public health, and education remained unattended to.

War, and the spiralling inflation it induced, transformed what had been a steady, progressive upward movement of commodity prices since the turn of the century into a catastrophic event for the popular classes in Bombay city. Declining access to basic foodstuffs and other means of subsistence led to a wave of strikes and, occasionally, direct action against Marwari and Bania shopkeepers whom they identified as the immediate source of their difficulties. The Bombay government did not appear too perturbed by this particular form of popular anger. ‘..Last Friday the millhands did some very thorough looting owing to high prices and rents which incidentally frightened the Marwaris out of their lives and made them lower their prices at once’, Willingdon wrote sardonically to Chelmsford.¹⁶³ Even though such spontaneous outbreaks of popular violence did require some palliative measures, it still very much left the local colonial state in the clear: essentially, social non-intervention meant that other, less important links in the chain of popular exploitation, also took most of the risks.

¹⁶¹*GOB Financial Proceedings* 1916, p. 811.

¹⁶²In 1917, for instance, the Bombay Budget showed a closing surplus balance of over Rs. 2 crore. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1918, p. 100; *GOB Financial Proceedings* 1918, pp. 385-86.

¹⁶³Willingdon to Chelmsford, 31 Jan. 1918. *Willingdon Papers*.

4. Radical voices: Horniman, the Chronicle, and the subversive narration of the city.

The First World War brought together newspaper, film, photography, and wireless telegraphy, each element reinforcing the others to produce a revolutionary impact on public opinion. In this process, the portable artifact of the daily newspaper emerged as pre-eminent, enabling it to embark on a new 'romance with speed'.¹⁶⁴ The increased volume of messages, and the shortening of the time between their production and reception, provided a tremendous impetus to newspaper expansion in most urban centres of the world, including Bombay.

In spite of the demand for increased security deposits, the quadrupling of the price of paper and the consequent rise in newspaper prices,¹⁶⁵ the daily press expanded at an unprecedented rate during the war years. Between 1914 and 1918 the combined circulation of the ten leading daily papers in Bombay went up from 37,800 to 64,400, an increase of seventy percent.¹⁶⁶ The two newspapers which provided the most extensive war coverage, the *Bombay Chronicle* and the *Times of India*, trebled their sales, rising from approximately 4,000 in 1913 to 12,000 in 1918.¹⁶⁷

Indeed, those newspapers which either could not or elected not to keep up with war events (and which were also, perhaps not altogether coincidentally, pro-government) such as the 'faultless and irreproachable' *Akhbar-e-Islam*,¹⁶⁸ and the *Islamic Mail*,

¹⁶⁴Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Harvard 1996), p. 181.

¹⁶⁵Barrier, *Banned..*, p. 71; *BC*, 16 Dec. 1916.

¹⁶⁶*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1914, pp. 284-351; and 1919, pp. 222-293. To these must also be added the influential weeklies *Kesari* (30, 000) and *Gujarati* (17, 600).

¹⁶⁷*ibid.* The *Times of India* was the only paper to manage a spectacular-lowering of its price, from 4 annas to 1 anna, on 1 May 1915. It attributed this both to the recent '..growth in India of the appetite for news' as well as to having installed 'new rotary presses of the latest type'. *TOI*, 17 April 1915. The *Bombay Chronicle*, on the other hand, felt compelled to raise its price from 1 to 2 annas on 1 January 1917. It was only in 1925 that it modernised its presses and returned to its pre-war price of 1 anna. *BC*, 16 Dec. 1916 and 6 Feb. 1925.

¹⁶⁸In the words of the Oriental Translator to the GOB. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1916, p. 174.

immediately dropped in circulation, the latter eventually ceasing publication in 1918.¹⁶⁹ Many papers also produced a daily evening war supplement which was eagerly snapped up by people alighting at tram stops or queueing at railway stations and outside newspaper offices on Medows Street and Hornby Road.¹⁷⁰

As the war settled into stalemate on the battlefield, and as its effects on Indian life began to appear more clearly, this accelerated circulation of words and images tended to focus less and less on directly reporting the conflict. Instead, newspapers began to concentrate increasingly on its social, economic, and political consequences for both Bombay and India.¹⁷¹ The drama and speed associated with war news influenced the way in which newspapers now discussed Indian issues, from everyday urban discontents to anticipated postwar constitutional changes. Nationalist newspaper columns became pervaded by a new sense of urgency and impatience, and a new resolve to articulate meaningful possibilities of political and social change in the light of the perceived opportunities created by the war.¹⁷² Significantly, newspapers that were becoming increasingly radical in tone such as the bilingual (English-Gujarati) *Praja Mitra & Parsi* were increasing their circulation, while those that remained or had become “moderate”, like the Gujarati *Bombay Samachar*, were seeing their sales plummet.¹⁷³

The new political discourse of the nationalist press was largely constructed out of the words of war-time. As the Allied war effort was grinding to exhaustion by early 1917, the combined effects of internal social unrest, American intervention, and the Irish and Russian rebellions forced British politicians to adopt an increasingly

¹⁶⁹GOB Confidential Proceedings 1917, p.18; FR (1) Sept. 1918.

¹⁷⁰Veering left off Flora Fountain and emerging on to Rampart Row in the Fort, Medows Street was the veritable “Fleet Street” of Bombay, the home of a large number of the city’s newspapers.

¹⁷¹Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1916; GOB Confidential Proceedings 1917, p. 117.

¹⁷²Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1917; GOB Confidential Proceedings 1918, pp. 82-85.

¹⁷³Annual Report on Newspapers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1918; GOB Confidential Proceedings 1919, p. 176.

democratic rhetoric in relation to war aims with a new emphasis on social justice and 'self-determination'. In the *Chronicle's* reformulation, the fundamental aim of the war was now '..to free the world from competitive nationalism' and to secure a 'united world-order..on a common basis of justice, equality and self-determining freedom'. It credited America's President Wilson with having given the Allies a new global vision, detached from 'the confused motives of European politicians'.¹⁷⁴

For nationalists, the key phrase around which political hopes were now crystallizing was of course 'Home Rule' (*Swarajya*), boosted by the Irish Easter uprising of 1916 and the political advance of Sinn Fein. Its semantic progression from the margins to the centre of political discourse¹⁷⁵ provides powerful testimony as to how unprecedented changes in material experience--the sufferings and sacrifices brought about by war--were rapidly leading to the discursive redefining of political values.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, *swarajya* now had potentially more radical connotations than in the pre-war era,¹⁷⁷ its emphasis on political autonomy from colonial rule being accompanied by the breakthrough of a whole new vocabulary of democratic and social aspirations.¹⁷⁸

In India, the launch of the two Home Rule Leagues by Tilak and Annie Besant was virtually simultaneous with events in Ireland; in July 1916, moreover, a British branch, the Home Rule for India League was set up in the Strand, London, under the

¹⁷⁴BC, 23 May 1918. The *Kesari* observed that even though the Russian masses were 'more uneducated and superstitious' than those of India, Russia seemed nonetheless to be moving to 'an original form of direct democracy'. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1918, p. 88.

¹⁷⁵The idea of 'home rule' went back to the nineteenth century with the formation of the Irish Home Rule League in 1873. Then however, the nationalist *Indian Public Opinion and Punjab Times* had commented that 'At present no one knows exactly what Home Rule means, for the simple reason that it means nothing.' H. V Brasted, *Irish Models and the Indian National Congress 1870-1922* in Jim Masselos (ed.), *Struggling and Ruling: The Indian National Congress 1885-1985* (London 1987), p. 26.

¹⁷⁶Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1916; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1917, p. 120.

¹⁷⁷Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was still little known; in spite of its intended timelessness, moreover, there is an unmistakable nineteenth century feel to this text.

¹⁷⁸This, in essence, distinguished the contemporary Home Rule campaign from the Swadeshi movement in Bengal in 1906-1908, with its marked Hindu revivalist overtones.

presidency of no less a figure than George Lansbury himself. Its objective was to 'secure recognition for India as a partner and not as a dependency in the approaching reconstruction of the Empire' by 'educating British democracy' about Indian affairs, particularly '..the British masses in whom power lies'.¹⁷⁹

Bombay, one of the main centres of the movement in India, was flooded by an unprecedented wave of pamphlets and handbills in Marathi, English, and Gujarati, revealing the expanding importance of print as the carrier of political ideas. In their first year the Leagues sold 347,000 copies of English and Marathi pamphlets.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, during this period, the main Home Rule newspapers, the *Chronicle*, *Sandesh*, and *Kesari*, became far more influential than a divided and weakened Congress in Western India. The influence of this 'extremist press' was attributed to 'the assiduous circulation in many directions of single copies'. The soon-to-be appointed Director of the Bombay government's new Information Bureau, J. F Gennings, wrote to the Governor that his investigations had ascertained that for every person who bought one of these papers, at least twenty became acquainted with its contents.¹⁸¹

Newspapers and pamphlets fed platform oratory, lecture tours, and discussion groups throughout Maharashtra, their words fermenting the numerous wartime social grievances, and ushering in a new relationship between print and orality. Indeed, platform oratory was generally performed by the same group of bilingual activists who wrote in newspapers and produced pamphlets, amounting in effect to 'oral journalism'.¹⁸² The Bombay government began to recognise that 'inflammatory harangues and journalistic rhetoric' now went hand-in-hand, a situation which it viewed with increasing dismay.¹⁸³ Traditionally, it was the vernacular rather than the English press which was the object of greater surveillance and the Bombay government was

¹⁷⁹DCI Reports, Sept. 1917, July 1916, and Oct. 1915.

¹⁸⁰H. F Owen, *The Home Rule Leagues 1915-18*, in D. A Low (ed.), *Soundings in South Asian History* (London 1968), p. 174; Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947* (London 1989), pp. 151-52.

¹⁸¹GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Nov. 1919, 281-87.

¹⁸²GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings July 1920, 265-278.

¹⁸³GOB Confidential Proceedings 1920, p. 26.

rather obsessed with identifying “friendly” vernaculars which could be propped up as a counterweight to the nationalist press. With this aim, it subsidized the Marathi *Jagat Vritta* and the Gujarati *Akhbar-e-Islam*, two very low-circulation anti-nationalist papers, thoroughly inadequate for the purpose.¹⁸⁴

A substantial part of colonial officials’ problem was their lack of skill in ‘playing the press’, their inability to imagine its potentialities. Certainly no Governor or Viceroy appears, during this period, to have made any effort to cultivate the press as an instrument of policy, whether in terms of favouring particular journalists with information, judiciously “planting” stories, or even maximizing photo-opportunities. This was in contrast, not only to British politicians at home, but to astute colonial operators such as Milner in South Africa. The *Times of India*’s Stanley Reed may have been the Bombay journalist closest to government circles, but he was no *confidante*. When he questioned the capabilities of the ageing British field commanders leading the Mesopotamia campaign, Viceroy Chelmsford wrote to Willingdon: ‘Please give Sir Stanley Reed a strong hint as coming from me personally that the leading article in the *Times of India* of August 7 (1916) is decidedly embarrassing..’¹⁸⁵

An old-school distaste for the press as a ‘damned nuisance’ limited the scope for colonial propaganda. Such rigidity was also reflected in the stilted English of official pamphlets and publications which even the Anglo-Indian press viewed as ‘ineptly written’ and completely lacking in journalistic skill.¹⁸⁶ Inevitably, this put a premium on censorship and repression. “Words” and their “authors”, rather than political figures or social groupings in the traditional sense, became the primary colonial target during the war as the struggle to mould public opinion, now open to a wider range of communicative influences, intensified dramatically. Here the colonial authorities

¹⁸⁴GOB Confidential Proceedings 1917, p. 216.

¹⁸⁵Chelmsford to Willingdon, 10 Aug. 1916. Willingdon Papers.

¹⁸⁶This was a view expressed by J.A Sandbrook, Editor of *The Englishman* of Calcutta. GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings Nov. 1919, 21.

suffered a major setback when the Bombay High Court ruled, in November 1916, that the demand for Home Rule did not amount to sedition.¹⁸⁷

‘Such papers only as Government from time to time sanction shall be admitted to reading rooms of schools and hostels or subscribed to by students’ proclaimed a somewhat naive Bombay government circular of June 1917 banning students from political activities.¹⁸⁸ Papers like the *Chronicle* now provided outlines for an alternative modernist “curriculum” compared to the archaic, classical framework of higher education imparted by Bombay University and Elphinstone College with its emphasis on a narrow range of English texts drawn from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries.¹⁸⁹ At risk now was the continued dominance of the established conventions of colonial discourse whose veils and silences masked knowledges deemed unsuitable for Indian society. The possibilities of urban renewal, the new social challenge posed by the labour movement, women’s campaign for the franchise, the development of the situation in Ireland and the emergence of socialist ideologies, all expressed a gathering momentum towards an expansion of political and social rights which would all too easily be echoed within India.

In the process, moreover, the West was losing its essentialized monocultural character, a significant hegemonic mystification of colonial rule. A vibrant, alternative West, producer of a critical modernity, was being discovered as *another* anti-colonial source: its discourses disseminated expanding aspirations for civic rights now carried by concepts such as ‘home rule’, ‘self-determination’, ‘socialism’, ‘suffragette’, ‘trade unions’, ‘town planning’. That these ideas were, in their original form, being accessed by a small minority of the English-knowing intelligentsia in no way lessened their potential danger in a city where much of the press, and virtually all political and labour

¹⁸⁷Owen, p. 171.

¹⁸⁸BC, 14 June 1917.

¹⁸⁹The History Curriculum was significantly dominated by Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the French Revolution*--not by Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man*. McDonald, *English Education and Social Reform...*, p. 459.

activists, were bilingual.¹⁹⁰ The loyalist, conservative *Islamic Mail* was well aware of this when it accused the *Chronicle* of instilling a 'deadly poison' in the public mind by providing the vernacular nationalist press with opportunities for inflammatory translations and renderings of its already 'hostile' articles.¹⁹¹

Moreover, some of these 'subversive' ideas were being re-worked in their Indian context, vernacularized, and, with the unprecedented mobility of texts, sent back to the metropolis. As a result, contestations of the colonial status quo were beginning to occur in England virtually simultaneously with the agitation in India, in spite of increasingly stringent restrictions on people's physical movements.¹⁹² In October 1918, the CID reported to the Government of India that the Home Rule for India League was *now publishing and circulating pamphlets dealing with burning Indian questions from the Home Rule point of view with the object of educating the English public in general and the members of both Houses of Parliament in particular. It posts copies of all its pamphlets and larger publications in book form (eg Keir Hardie's India) to each MP and to all important political personalities in England. Latterly it has taken to countering the activities of the Sydenham League by issuing and distributing "counter" pamphlets. It is not an unusual sight in London to see 2 sets of girls distributing 'pro' and 'anti' Indian pamphlets respectively to visitors at the public entrance to a meeting organised by the Women's International League or the Britain and India Society or the Labourites..*¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰Four of the city's ten leading dailies in 1917 were bilingual: *Sanj Vartaman* (English-Gujarati), *Praja Mitra&Parsi* (English-Gujarati), *Jam-e-Jamshed* (English-Gujarati), *Dnyan Prakash* (English-Marathi), while a fifth, the leading Marathi paper *Sandesh*, eventually brought out an English edition, *The Message*. Their combined circulation amounted to around 30, 000. Of the two most influential weeklies, the Marathi *Kesari* had an English edition, *Mahratta*, while the *Gujarati* was a bilingual paper (Gujarati-English). Annual Reports on Indian Papers 1914-19; *Bombay Confidential Proceedings* 1915-20.

¹⁹¹*Islamic Mail*, 31 Jan. 1915; *BNNR* no. 6, 1915. Most of the vernacular nationalist papers routinely carried translated extracts from the *Chronicle*. *GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings* Nov. 1919, 281-87.

¹⁹²In 1917, the Government forbade a Home Rule deputation from proceeding to England while the introduction of the passport system gave it further leverage to restrict travel abroad.

¹⁹³*DCI Reports*, Oct. 1918.

Thus, to the great surprise of the colonial authorities whose eyes remained fixed on the vernacular press, it was the English-language *Bombay Chronicle*'s critical modernist articulations that came to pose the most radical challenge to the wartime regime. The paper's offices at no. 8 Medows Street provided a convivial, if somewhat chaotic,¹⁹⁴ interactive space which encompassed some of the most prominent nationalist members of the bilingual urban intelligentsia.¹⁹⁵ The varied wartime activities of this group, at once producers of the most widely circulated daily urban text, and principal actors in a range of public arenas outside the newspaper office, enabled it to exercise immense influence over urban public opinion.

Horniman was not only editor, and therefore leader of the paper's production team; he was also a home rule, labour, and humanitarian activist.¹⁹⁶ Another member of the editorial staff, Sayud Hossain, a recently returned barrister from London where he had been active in Indian student circles, brought the paper a host of useful Western contacts; in the city, he embarked upon nationalist consciousness-raising work amongst students. Sayed Abdullah Brelvi, a graduate of Elphinstone College, described by Horniman as a 'brilliant young writer',¹⁹⁷ and effectively the paper's number two, had a keen interest in labour issues and was a prominent member of an emerging group of nationalist Muslims in the city; this group's effective leader was Jinnah,¹⁹⁸ who served

¹⁹⁴The original work habits of its journalists and the fervent, hyperactive atmosphere of the press room provoked the consternation of the *Chronicle*'s "old guard" directors. One of them, Jehangir Petit complained that unlike the 'well-regulated' *Times of India* where the editor arrived at his desk at 10.30 a.m and finished work by 6 p.m, the editorial staff of the *Chronicle* usually started work in the evening and went on till the early hours of the morning. *GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings* Nov. 1917, 16.

¹⁹⁵Generally referred to by members of the Bombay government as 'the Chronicle gang'. *GOB Home Special file 204*, 1919.

¹⁹⁶During the GIP Railway strike in the summer of 1917, for instance, Horniman enlisted the help of the prominent nationalist and grain merchant L. R Tairsee, and organised a relief fund and the opening of cheap grain shops for the striking workers and their families. *BC*, 8 Feb. 1921.

¹⁹⁷*GOB Home Special file 204 A (I)* 1919.

¹⁹⁸Indeed Jinnah's leadership of the Home Rule campaign against the dominant class's attempts to present departing Governor Willingdon with a 'memorial' on behalf of grateful 'citizens of Bombay' briefly made him the city's leading "radical" nationalist figure towards the end of 1918. James Masselos, *Some Aspects of Bombay*

as the *Chronicle*'s legal counsel while being a leading activist, along with Horniman, of Annie Besant's Home Rule League. In turn, the League provided the paper with an outer circle of 'staunch friends', such as Sarojini Naidu, Umar Sobhani, and Shankerlal Banker.¹⁹⁹

The paper shared with the "extreme left" of nationalist opinion a macro-level discourse on 'Home Rule', repeatedly articulating the view that '..the cure for most of our social and economic distress lies in the transfer of State-power to the representatives of the people, who are best qualified by intimate knowledge and sympathy to introduce social reforms at a pace which it is inherently impossible for the present bureaucratic government to equal.'²⁰⁰

It was however at the arguably more crucial micro-level, in the building up of a local, civic model of Home Rule, that the paper's voice was distinctively unique. It provided a narrative that revealed the city and its problems in a new light. "Citizenship" was perhaps the keyword in this discourse which sought to educate urban civil society into the realisation of rights and responsibilities inherent in the collective life of a metropolis.²⁰¹ Against the dominant belief, shared by colonials and most nationalists, in the privileged power of capital to shape the city, the *Chronicle* emphasised the rights of ordinary people to good housing, wages, health, and public transport.

The *Chronicle* thus amended the official sociology of the city to include workers and the urban poor. It repeatedly emphasised the plight of various groups of workers--mill-hands, labourers, railway workers, but also the vast numbers of low paid clerks employed in Government, Municipal, and private offices--from price rises and

City Politics in 1919, in Ravinder Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics: The Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919* (Delhi 1971), pp. 161-166.

¹⁹⁹Sarojini Naidu wrote the introduction to *A Friend of India*, an edited collection of Horniman's speeches and writings in which she praised his 'mastery of political issues', his 'rare combination of imagination, humour and tenderness' and the lively, satirical quality of his writing, reminiscent 'of Swift and Voltaire'. L. R. Tairsee and R. Venkat (eds.), *A Friend of India* (Bombay 1918), pp. 19-21; *GOB Home Special file 204 A (I)*, 1919.

²⁰⁰*BC*, 14 March 1919.

²⁰¹See chapter four.

shortages during the war. This established the context for a series on the future of the working classes which dwelt on the official neglect of workers' well-being, the excessive hours of work permitted by the Factory Act, the lack of opportunities for education, and the atrocious housing conditions.

Illustrations from the evolving world of European labour, moreover, were used to amplify the sense of these oppressions. Reports of urban labour struggles were interspersed with regular features on 'Socialism and War' which traced the various episodes through which the deprivations of war had given rise to militant demands for social justice and equality in British society. New methods of industrial labour organisation, such as the introduction of the three-shift system over 24 hours in British munitions factories, were highlighted.²⁰² Editorials then argued that demands for higher wages in Bombay were inherently just, but what was also required now was for 'labour itself..to raise its collective voice' by forming trade unions, a route along which England was already moving. These would serve to educate the public, enabling it to arrive at a '.. just appreciation of the dignity and value of labour'.²⁰³

The narrative skill which enabled the construction of relationships between the local and the global gave the paper a unique angle of vision, necessarily subversive of the narrow colonial world-view.

When the city's postmen went on strike in September 1917, the *Chronicle* became an active participant in the event. The dispute, which lasted six months, inaugurated the technique of investigative reporting which shed new light on aspects of the unknown world of postal labour. The paper provided regular, often daily, coverage of the strike's progress which included hour-by-hour accounts featuring interviews with leading personalities (labour leaders, advocates, the Postmaster-General) who were followed to different locations. At the same time, a dossier on the rise in the cost of living provided the background for an analysis of the postal workers' motivation; while editorials described the lower grades as 'notoriously overworked' making their conditions '..in

²⁰²BC, 24 July 1916.

²⁰³BC, 27 Nov. 1915 and 6 Jan. 1919.

these days of war prices and privation' doubly 'insupportable'.²⁰⁴ Moreover, throughout the strike period, the paper published a series of letters critical of the authorities' response to strikers' demands while editorials elaborated on the consequent inconvenience to the public.²⁰⁵

Indeed, its indispensability as a source of both information and analysis enabled the *Chronicle* to enter the neighbourhood meeting-places of the postal workers. Here, the Cambridge-educated barrister and Union activist, Vinayak Ganpat Dalvi,²⁰⁶ used the paper as an instrument in the struggle, translating the relevant articles into Marathi for the benefit of the rank-and-file. An article which appeared on 18 September was reported to have '..had a very considerable effect on the temper of the postmen and to have caused many waverers to throw in their lot with those who were anxious to strike'.²⁰⁷ In this instance, the process of vernacularization was immediate, serving the pressing needs of militant labour action and providing workers with a language to define, and seek solutions to, their discontent. The following day, virtually all the city's eight hundred postmen went on strike.²⁰⁸

Horniman himself was an influential figure in the strike, addressing workers' meetings in different parts of the city, and providing logistic support and advice on the establishment of a trade union. When the strike ended with an offer of a pay increase of between ten and twenty percent for the various grades and the formation of a Postmen's Union, the editor of the *Chronicle* became an immensely popular figure amongst the postal workers. The CID described an ensuing meeting held at the Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya in Girgaum as follows:

B. G Horniman presided. Vinayak Ganpat Dalvi..thanked Horniman for the trouble he had taken in championing their cause during the last postal strike. He was followed by two postmen who were loud in their praises of Horniman's services. Horniman replied

²⁰⁴BC, 22 Sept. 1917.

²⁰⁵GOB Confidential Proceedings 1920, p. 16.

²⁰⁶Burnett-Hurst, p. 104.

²⁰⁷GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings Feb. 1918.

²⁰⁸GOB Confidential Proceedings 1920, p. 16.

thanking the speakers for the honour done to him. He pointed out that the condition of labour in India was miserable and that wherever possible unions should be established. He added that such unions existed in Western countries and wielded a great deal of influence. His speech was translated into Marathi by V. G Dalvi.. 209

While involving much fewer workers than in textile mill labour disputes, militancy in the postal service radically struck at the Bombay government, for it directly revealed the *sarkar* as an exploitative employer while demonstrating the ability of workers to paralyse a strategically key department in the war effort. This much was understood both by the Postmaster-General who queried with the Bombay government whether any legal steps could be taken to prevent Horniman from ‘deliberately instigating’ the postmen ‘to mischief’,²¹⁰ and by the Commissioner of Police who wrote that ‘..the intrusion of the professional agitator between the employer and the employee is objectionable enough when the employer is a private individual or concern, but infinitely more objectionable when the employer is the State.’²¹¹

The paper’s discursive style involved a particular assembling and juxtaposing of events which imposed a coherence on the events described; this in turn invited a critical reading or ‘decoding’ of the colonial order. In the space of a few days in July 1917, for instance, the *Chronicle* provided a structured narrative linking the stories about the Dadar Labour Camp with other events that were occurring simultaneously. The letters alleging the molestation and abduction of women were featured alongside reports of unrest among *mehtas* at the Mulji Jetha Market, and of a strike by railway workers of the GIP workshops. This included an account of the strikers’ march to the Fort and their less than welcome reception by the police. The feature described in some detail how the workers were ‘marshalled up’ in an enclosure on the Esplanade Maidan in the monsoon heat for five-and-a-half hours without food or water; it ended with a carefully weighted fingering of the Police Commissioner, suggesting that ‘..if the attention of the

²⁰⁹DCI Reports, April 1918.

²¹⁰GOB Judicial Dept., part B, June 1918; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1918.

²¹¹DCI Reports, April 1918.

Commissioner of Police is called to the matter, he will surely arrange should such an occasion again occur, for water and refreshment..' 212

In such instances, the newspaper report of the event itself constituted part of its eventfulness. In a Bombay characterized by class and community-based spatial segmentation, the *Chronicle* revealed diverse aspects of the city beyond the knowledge of communities and individuals. It attempted to elucidate the problems of Bombay's milk supply by carrying out a week-long fact-finding mission to ascertain conditions in the city's milch cattle stables.²¹³ It also published the stream of complaints sent in by citizens about rising prices, low wages, food shortages, lack of water, bad roads, overcrowding on public transport, and municipal apathy. When the Bombay government issued its circular banning students from participation in home rule agitation, the *Chronicle* opened its columns to letters protesting against College principals' attempts to 'control the activities of their students outside the four walls of the College'.²¹⁴

Horniman and the *Chronicle* were dangerous not only because they relentlessly preached the ideological virtues of home rule, but because their critiques of the urban colonial regime offered practical insights into how *swaraj* might be lived locally. It is significant that the CID's file of the *Chronicle*'s 'objectionable articles' included not only direct criticisms of government ('Where Lord Chelmsford has failed') but also pieces on everyday grievances such as 'The Third-Class Passenger', 'Public and Tramways: Hardships of Passengers', 'Economy and Extravagance', 'Sacked For Being Assaulted'.²¹⁵

In August 1917, in the wake of the *Chronicle*'s attempts to elucidate happenings at the Dadar Military Labour Camp, Willingdon enquired about the possibility of deporting Horniman to England only to be informed by the Government of India's

²¹²GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings Sept. 1917.

²¹³BC, 16-29 July 1918.

²¹⁴BC, 25 Nov. 1915.

²¹⁵GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings May 1919.

Legal Department that there was ‘..no power in the DOI Rules which will authorise sending a European British subject to England’.²¹⁶ Two months later, the Governor of Bombay was back on the offensive. This time, he made a dramatic attempt to secure Horniman’s dismissal from the paper by putting pressure on the *Chronicle*’s Board of Directors, still essentially made up of the moderate followers of Pherozeshah Mehta. They were secretly summoned to the Secretariat and warned of the severest consequences that would ensue if the paper did not desist from its ‘constant calumny’ of government.²¹⁷

Horniman, furious that the Directors had gone behind his back, resigned immediately and briefly seems to have entertained the idea of returning to England to stand as a candidate for the Labour Party in the 1918 General Election--though the Bombay government hoped for a rather more sinister fate:

*The Government of Bombay are of opinion that Horniman constitutes the driving power of the mischievous element in Bombay and that if he went to England and stayed there, the Chronicle would cease to be a power. It is possible that it might become more violent in tone, but in that case it would be easier to deal with it. On the other hand, it is possible that in England Horniman would be regarded as a degenerate, and the Home authorities would find no difficulty in dealing with him. Indeed he might find himself at the Front.*²¹⁸

²¹⁶Exile to Aden was also discussed. The Secretary to the Bombay government wrote that ‘..A Horniman wielding a clever pen in a language generally understood and surrounded by a noisy crowd of admirers would be a very different thing to a Horniman not allowed to speak or write to the public, or even to private people, except under censorship..Mr. Horniman as a private individual is a much less dangerous person than as Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*..’ *GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings* Feb. 1918, 18-30.

²¹⁷*DCI Reports*, Nov. 1917.

²¹⁸*GOB Home Special* 204, 1919. The reference to Horniman’s ‘degeneracy’ concerned his alleged homosexuality which the colonial state played up in its attempt to displace his political opposition (unthinkable since he was supposed to be “one of them”) on to the terrain of sexual deviance. The Secretary, Home Department, GOI, advised the Viceroy that Horniman was ‘..notoriously reputed to be of bad moral character’; Willingdon also wrote to the Viceroy that he was ‘a vicious, degenerate brute’ who exercised ‘a hideous influence here and would be better in a munitions factory at home than as a leader of thought here..’ *GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings*

Within days, however, Horniman's supporters among the shareholders and staff, 'in a series of adroit moves' had secured the resignations of Jehangir Petit, Chimanlal Setalvad and other members of the party which had "visited" Willingdon. In their place, a new unambiguously pro-Home Rule Board came into existence; its members included Jinnah as chairman, Umar Sobhani, and M. R Jayakar. Horniman was back as editor, 'on his own terms', and in an even stronger position.

The colonial authorities now viewed deportation as the only solution, and for most of 1918 discussions between the Government of Bombay and the Government of India focused on setting up the appropriate legal machinery to make this possible and on seizing the most 'opportune moment' for 'a big coup against the Home Rulers'. By August 1918 the legal framework had been devised: the amendment of Defense of India Rule 3A by the insertion of a new clause (d) empowering local governments to 'remove from British India', without reference to the Courts, any person(s) whose activities were 'prejudicial to public order'.²¹⁹

That Horniman's use of the assertive techniques of modern journalism could appear so threatening reveals the extent to which the world of colonial officialdom feared and recoiled from the profound changes that were affecting the world during this period. As a clearly worried Home Department chief Sir William Vincent wrote to the Viceroy: '..There is at least a possibility that the views of the Government of India and of the Secretary of State may be swept aside in a fit of generosity and gratitude on the conclusion of peace by a nation which is daily becoming more democratic during the war'. 'The British people', he went on, 'are at present much influenced by the political views of dominions even more democratic than the UK.'²²⁰

As from 1918, the authorities banned the entry into India of British labour newspapers and journals such as the *Daily Herald*, *Common Sense*, *The Labour*

March 1918, 374-75; *GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings* Aug. 1918, 64-65; *GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings* Feb. 1918, 30.

²¹⁹*GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings* Aug. 1918, 18.

²²⁰*GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings* May 1917.

Leader, and the *New Statesman*,²²¹ while the Bombay Postal Censor intercepted “Home Rule” correspondence with Labour figures in England. The rising tide which Chelmsford, Willingdon and their officials were increasingly struggling to contain was no longer a feature just of Bombay and other parts of India, but a global movement of peoples variously affected by the war. Horniman asserted that neither the political nor the labour unrest in India could be checked since both were ‘..part of the world-wide movement prompted by the aspiration for freedom and equal rights’.²²²

Both on the streets and in discourses, the old hierarchies of power and domination seen as responsible for the fatalities, deprivations, and dislocations of war, were being increasingly confronted, inspired by either nationalism or socialism (and sometimes by a combination of the two). Throughout 1918 the CID was reporting on the socialism of the growing ‘Labour Parties in England’, a socialism, it warned the Government of India, that was strongly in support of India’s right to ‘national self-determination’.²²³ The difficulties faced by colonial officials in India were perhaps caused as much by their dismay at the emergence of a new Britain as by their desire to hold on to an old India.

The revolution in communications which the war had dramatically intensified was bringing the world closer together. A key feature of this situation was that more words circulated around the world at a faster rate than ever before, thus multiplying the uses to which they could be put and enhancing their disorderly, subversive potential. Out of this global interchange of concepts, ideas, and aspirations, new critiques and new visions of society were emerging. The rapidly deteriorating state of the city, moreover, ensured that Bombay’s bilingual intelligentsia would seek their virtually immediate vernacularization. The guardians of colonial power and privilege now faced a new and

²²¹These were referred to by the CID as ‘literature prejudicial to war morale..’ The main fear was that the pacifist viewpoints they expressed would ‘infect’ the Indian press ‘which has up to the present been almost free from the taint of pacifism’. *DCI Reports*, July 1918.

²²²*BC*, 11 Jan. 1919.

²²³*DCI Reports*, February 1919.

unheralded threat, the sources of which were potentially multiple. The strengthening of the legal regime of censorship, ostensibly a war measure, was in fact a response to the new danger, guided by the sentiments that had inspired the Press Act a few years earlier: to check 'the campaign to sow the poison of sedition by means of the printed word'.²²⁴

The *Chronicle*'s narratives fashioned new designs for the city by drawing connections between the seemingly different worlds of urban labour struggles, national aspirations for home rule, and international movements for social change. This process enabled an ongoing diffusion and exchange of ideas which contributed to the radicalisation of public opinion. Born on the eve of the war, the new daily had hardly elicited a mention in the weekly newspaper reports in 1914 and 1915. By 1917, however, it was described as '..easily the most important of all the papers included in the Weekly Report; it has a large circulation and is a power in Indian politics today.'²²⁵

In the space of eighteen months, the *Chronicle* had moved from the undistinctive middle ground of Bombay politics to a clear position of hegemony and leadership within the nationalist press. By the end of 1917, the Annual Report on Indian Papers was commenting on the 'remarkable change' that had come over virtually 'the entire Indian press' which was now in favour of some form of 'Home Rule', including '..previously anti-Congress organs such as *Rast Goftar*'.²²⁶

The paper even appears to have restricted the influence of forces favouring a more conciliatory attitude towards the government. 'The main difficulty I see in the future', wrote the departing Willingdon to Montagu in July 1918, 'is as to whether we shall ever get the Moderates to combine. I have seen several and implored them to form an organisation, but they are all frightened of what the "Chronicle" will say about

²²⁴GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings March 1917.

²²⁵GOB Confidential Proceedings 1919, p. 177.

²²⁶GOB Confidential Proceedings 1918, p. 74.

them.’²²⁷ A mere artifact, the *Bombay Chronicle* appears nonetheless to have redrawn the boundaries of political discourse in wartime Bombay.

²²⁷Willington to Montagu, 11 July 1918. *Willington Papers*.

Chapter three. Urban confrontations: Gandhi, Horniman, and the material test of spiritual politics.

1. Gandhi and the challenge of Horniman's Bombay.

The political philosophy of Gandhi was, it can be argued, largely constructed in response to the modern energies of city life. Drawing on the reactionary anti-modernism of Carlyle and Ruskin, Gandhi claimed in 1909 that it was not the British people who were ruling India but ‘..modern civilisation through its railways, telegraphs, telephones, and almost every invention which has been claimed to be a triumph of civilisation’ including ‘tram-cars and electricity’. These ‘purely material’ technologies were synonymous with the “corruptions” of modern urban living, making ‘Bombay, Calcutta, and other chief cities..the real plague spots’ of India.¹

Hind Swaraj's indictment of a civilisation based on the twin pillars of machines and large cities was not lessened by Gandhi's face-to-face encounter with wartime Bombay. Arriving in the city in January 1915, he wrote to his nephew Maganlal:

*I don't like Bombay, though. It looks as if it were the scum of London. I see here all the shortcomings of London but find none of its amenities; this is also one of the benefits of living in India. It would seem that Lady India had resolved to exhibit nothing but the scum of London lest we should be thrown off our balance by the amenities.*²

It is doubtful, however, whether the people of Bombay viewed the absence of civic amenities as “benefits”. It was precisely the everyday problems arising from the lack of adequate wages, decent homes, and an amenable environment that made living in “the second city of the Empire” such a harsh experience. This situation considerably worsened during the war years which brought an unprecedented increase in both commodity prices and urban congestion. While Gandhi's exploits in South Africa ensured that he received an enthusiastic welcome from all strands of nationalist opinion in the city, Horniman and the *Bombay Chronicle* were already engaged in articulating a

¹Anthony J. Parel (ed.), *Gandhi: Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (CUP 1997), pp. 110, 130.

²*CWMG*, vol. xiii, pp. 4-5.

powerful multi-dimensional critique of the colonial order in which urban regeneration and 'civic reconstruction' were posed as indispensable aspects of any anti-colonial nationalist project.³

As the war ended, Horniman intensified his militant activities in the city while the *Chronicle* multiplied narratives subversive of the colonial order. During the Great Textile Strike of early 1919 Horniman made regular visits to the striking mills in the north of the city, while the *Chronicle*'s daily coverage of events put the case of the mill hands squarely before the public.⁴ The labour unrest was the '...manifestation of a growing, deep, and widespread though silent discontent' caused by the 'cumulative hardships of abnormally high prices of necessities of life and of the ravages of famine and epidemics'. The new tactic of general strike was, moreover, 'a legitimate weapon of organised Labour against organised Capital' since their relations were founded 'on injustice and inhumanity' which amounted to 'a modern but more sinister form of human slavery'.⁵

Throughout the duration of the strike the *Chronicle* kept up the pressure for a settlement in favour of the mill hands, launching pieces carefully designed to encourage government intervention. Letters were also published regretting the 'dead silence' of the Home Rule Leagues' leaders over the labour conflict.⁶ At the height of negotiations between the Bombay government and the city's leading industrialists, a carefully crafted editorial expressed 'the fullest faith in Sir George Lloyd's good intentions' while reminding readers of the local colonial state's traditional anti-labour bias.⁷

The rise of a labour movement asserting its rights to urban citizenship was, for Horniman, an essential component of a regenerated post-war Bombay. The war's culmination in 'a people's victory' had resulted in a 'tremendous rise in the world-status of the labour movement' and he welcomed 'the growing regard for the amenities

³See previous chapter.

⁴*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1920, p. 18.

⁵*BC*, 11 Jan. 1919.

⁶*BC*, 20 Jan. 1919.

⁷*BC*, 20 Jan. 1919.

of life' as promising to mark an end to the 'mean streets, mean houses, and mean backyards' of pre-war urban society in which peace was merely 'a transparent camouflage for cut-throat commercial warfare'.⁸ The emergence of trade unions signified a new emphasis on collective needs and promised to bring a fresh vigour in combatting prevailing urban inequalities.

Horniman's activism drew upon a wide organisational basis, shaping a world-view which integrated local, national, and global perspectives. As editor of the *Chronicle*, he pioneered a new assertive journalism which was impacting on both public opinion and the colonial state; as a trade unionist, he founded the Press Association of India; a prominent member of Annie Besant's Home Rule League, Horniman had by the end of the war years outgrown its limited mobilizational strategies; he also chaired the Fort District Congress Committee and was now an influential figure in all-India nationalist circles. Locally, he was instrumental in the formation of the Postmen's Union while also championing tramway passengers' grievances;⁹ his activities within the Bombay Humanitarian League included relief work amongst the poor in the city's working-class neighbourhoods during the influenza epidemic of 1918.¹⁰ Finally, his encouragement of student political participation had brought upon him the vice-presidency of the Young India Student Society.¹¹

It would appear that Horniman developed an interest in using "passive resistance" as a weapon against colonial wartime repression independently of Gandhi. On 12 August 1917, he introduced a motion at a meeting of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee advocating non-violent mass action to secure Annie Besant's release from internment.¹² Thus when Gandhi launched the Kaira satyagraha in early 1918, it immediately received Horniman's enthusiastic endorsement. A reporter was sent to

⁸BC, 7 Jan. 1919.

⁹BC, 3 April 1919.

¹⁰BC, 14 July 1919 and 26 Jan. 1921.

¹¹Government of Maharashtra, *Source Material for a history of the Freedom Movement*, vol. ii (1885-1920), p. 811.

¹²ibid.

Gujarat and the *Chronicle* gave his despatches constant coverage, Horniman once again making effective use of modern journalistic devices (bold headlines, juxtaposition of events) to invite an anti-colonial reading of the satyagraha--to the great disconcertion of Gandhi.

At Horniman's invitation, Gandhi arrived in Bombay in early February and addressed a public meeting at the Mulji Jetha cloth market on the situation in Kaira. Although Gandhi was the only scheduled speaker, Horniman was forced to address the gathering 'in response to persistent calls from the audience'.¹³ This probably persuaded Gandhi not to confront Horniman directly: instead he instructed his secretary, Mahadev Desai to attempt to prevail upon his childhood friend Sayed Abdullah Brelvi, Horniman's number two at the *Chronicle*, to see Gandhi's 'point of view'. Desai's letters to Brelvi reveal Gandhi's futile attempts at controlling the news emanating from Kaira, and his failure to comprehend the new journalism of investigative and dissenting reporting: 'Gandhiji', wrote Desai to Brelvi on 22 February 1918, 'was very much annoyed when he read the *Chronicle*'s article on the Kaira distress. He took the correspondent to task and has charged him not to send any information of the sort in future..I hope you will see to it and kindly speak to Horniman in the matter.'¹⁴

Gandhi, who on other occasions insisted on absolute openness of thought and deed, apparently considered the article akin to 'revealing to our enemies our points--weak or strong'.¹⁵ A few weeks later, the Mahatma was bemoaning the *Chronicle*'s 'absolute lack' of all 'clear knowledge of facts, moderation, and perspection' and by mid-April was determined 'not to have anything to do with the Bombay people and with the Press'.¹⁶ It would not be for the last time, moreover, that the Gandhian perspective

¹³GOB Confidential Proceedings 1920, p. 16

¹⁴Mahadev Desai to Sayed Abdullah Brelvi, 22 Feb. 1918. Brelvi Papers.

¹⁵ibid.

¹⁶Desai to Brelvi, 9 and 14 April 1918.

would coincide with that of the colonial authorities: the Bombay CID also condemned the paper's 'booming' of the Kaira agitation as 'most objectionable'.¹⁷

The *Chronicle* carried on its coverage regardless. The conflict here was between Horniman's commitment to reaching public opinion through the construction of a coherent anti-colonial narrative out of contemporary events such as the Kaira agitation; and the politically ambivalent moral authoritarianism implicit in Gandhi's determination to see '...the cleanest and straightest of agitations that was ever organised in Gujarat' in which not even a hint of any animosity 'on the part of the workers towards the Government and Government officials' should be displayed.¹⁸ When in August Horniman invited Gandhi to chair the working committee of the Humanitarian Conference, convened to organise famine relief in the Presidency, the Mahatma, who confessed to being 'recruiting-mad', refused.¹⁹

While all sections of the nationalist movement in the Bombay Presidency opposed the Rowlatt Bills, this was largely a piecemeal rather than a structured opposition. A general sense of shock and astonishment greeted this first post-war measure and Gandhi very much shared the general reaction that the proposed legislation represented the 'breaking of a promise', a "wrong" that was 'out of character' with colonial intentions. Horniman however perceived Rowlatt as intrinsic to a new phase of colonial repression inaugurated by the Press Act and reinforced by the War, a phase characterized by an increasing abrogation of civil rights.

In an editorial on 27 January 1919 calling for a campaign of mass protest against the Bills, he observed: 'the appetite for repression seems to grow with feeding. Whoever has heard of anticipatory repressive legislation?..' ²⁰ The best riposte would be an India-wide protest through a series of simultaneous, locally organised events. This would reveal 'the lightening speed with which the older ideas are being thrust

¹⁷Government of Maharashtra, *Source Material for a history of the Freedom Movement*, vol. iii. *Mahatma Gandhi 1915-22*, p. 81.

¹⁸Desai to Brelvi, 9 April 1918. *Brelvi Papers*.

¹⁹Mahadev H. Desai, *Day-to-Day with Gandhi* (Varanasi 1968), vol. i, p. 225.

²⁰BC, 27 Jan. 1919.

aside and fresh aspirations springing up in the hearts of a united India.’²¹ It would open colonial eyes to a new Indian political consciousness whose democratic aspirations no longer tolerated such authoritarian and repressive measures.

The required scale of mass protest was ideally suited to the technique of satyagraha. At an anti-Rowlatt public meeting in Bombay in mid-February, Horniman urged the adoption of ‘passive resistance’ pointing out that the new powers were likely to be used to crush the Home Rule movement.²² But the question was to persuade Gandhi. In between addressing several anti-Rowlatt protest meetings, Horniman led a Bombay delegation to meet with Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel at the Ahmedabad ashram on 22 February.

The delegates included Umar Sobhani and Shankerlal Banker, who were on the *Chronicle*’s Board of Directors, as well as the city’s leading woman activist, the poetess Sarojini Naidu. Horniman once again issued an invitation to Gandhi, this time to launch and to lead, from Bombay city, an all-India “passive resistance” campaign against the Rowlatt Bills. After much hesitation and much discussion which lasted two full days and nights, Gandhi finally agreed. The text of a “Satyagraha Vow” was collectively drafted, with a view to obtaining as many signatures as possible pledging to disobey the Rowlatt laws as well as ‘such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit’.²³

While the Bombay delegation deferred to Gandhi’s experience as an organiser of non-violent protest campaigns, it retained, in all important respects, co-authorship of the anti-Rowlatt movement in the city. During February and March, the city remained the centre of public protests against the ‘dangerous’ escalation in ‘..infringement of public liberties’.²⁴ On 3 March, the CID reported that ‘..the Rowlatt Bills are the talk of the

²¹BC, 7 Feb. 1919.

²²FR (1) Feb. 1919.

²³YI, 12 March 1919; BC, 1 March 1919.

²⁴YI, 5 Feb. 1919.

town at present. The *Chronicle* has helped to keep them prominently before the public by publishing M. K Gandhi's Satyagraha Vow in bold type for the last 3 days.'²⁵

Between March and early April, the vast majority of signatories were Bombay citizens and the campaign of local mobilization largely owed its success to the activities and speeches of Horniman and other bilingual Home Rulers informally associated with the *Chronicle*, and to the paper's 'campaign of extraordinary vehemence' in favour of civil disobedience.²⁶ Horniman's close associate and legal adviser to the *Chronicle*, M. K Azad, produced an Urdu pamphlet on passive resistance derived from Thoreau's *On Civil Disobedience*, primarily targetted at the educated Muslims of Madanpura.²⁷ The campaign also involved a number of public meetings for women in which Sarojini Naidu played a prominent role, usually electing to address her audiences in Hindustani.²⁸

Less than two weeks after the Ahmedabad meeting, the proposed Committee was, on Gandhi's suggestion, set up as the Satyagraha Sabha. While Gandhi claims all credit for its creation in his Autobiography,²⁹ its headquarters were significantly located in Bombay: on Apollo Street in the Fort, a stone's throw away from the *Chronicle*'s offices on Medows Street. Moreover, Gandhi as president had Horniman alongside him as vice-president with Umar Sobhani, Shankerlal Banker, Sarojini Naidu, M. K Azad, and the labour activist D.D Sathaye as secretaries.³⁰ They quietly resisted the Mahatma's high-handed attempt to impose Gujarati as the Sabha's language of deliberation.³¹ Gujarati, incidentally, was also being contested in the cinema where the early, silent Indian mythological film tended to be '..explained in Gujarati wordings

²⁵Bombay Police Secret Abstracts, January-June 1919, p. 155.

²⁶Statement prepared by the GOB for the Disorders Inquiry Committee relating to the 1919 disturbances in the city of Bombay. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1920, p. 20.

²⁷Bombay Police Secret Abstracts, January-June 1919, p. 187.

²⁸BC, 10 March 1919.

²⁹M. K Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (London 1982), p. 411.

³⁰GOB Home Special 355(74) II-1919; BC, 5 March 1919.

³¹Gandhi, *..... An Autobiography*, p. 411.

only on the screen'. There were demands for subtitles in the more inclusive Hindustani which would be '...found convenient by both Gujarati and Marathi cinema-goers'.³²

For the first time, not only would the venue for launching an agitational campaign not be of Gandhi's choosing, but it would happen as an *urban satyagraha*--a testimony to the primacy of Bombay as the centre of gathering anti-colonial dissent, but a concept which fitted uneasily with the Mahatma's well publicized anti-urban views.³³

For Horniman, Bombay was the ideal launch-pad of civil disobedience, precisely because of its receptivity to 'the new world forces' which had made its citizens 'conscious of their rights and privileges', and now ready to escalate the pressure on the colonial bureaucracy through peaceful mass agitation.³⁴ Gandhi's emphasis was, from the start, somewhat different: 'Satyagraha', he explained in a letter to the press, '...is essentially a religious movement...a process of purification and penance. It seeks to secure reforms or redress of grievances by self-suffering.'³⁵

For Gandhi the question was whether "materialist" city people could adhere to the "truth" of non-violence in their quest for justice; for Horniman it was whether satyagraha would enable the attainment of a new level of political pressure on the colonial state. In many ways, the 24-hour hartal announced by the Satyagraha Sabha for Sunday 6 April represented a compromise between Gandhi's cautious and introspective orientation and Horniman's more activist quest.

Horniman was determined that the citizens of Bombay should pass Gandhi's rigorous test and reveal the possibilities of urban satyagraha. At a mass public meeting at Shantaram's Chawl on 1 April, he counseled action '...in a true Satyagrahi spirit.. (people) must show by their behaviour that Bombay was at the forefront of every movement that was going to free them from the bonds of repression.'³⁶ Moreover,

³²"Indian Films." Letter to the *Chronicle*, 23 Jan. 1921.

³³Gandhi's discomfort was clear from the start: 'I soon found that there was not likely to be much chance of agreement between myself and the intelligentsia composing this Sabha', he wrote in his *Autobiography*. Gandhi, p. 411.

³⁴BC, 4 April 1919.

³⁵BC, 25 March 1919.

³⁶BC, 2 April 1919.

along with the labourite D.D Sathaye, he favoured working-class participation in the observance as an assertion of their social rights to citizenship.³⁷ Gandhi, however, was more cautious: addressing a meeting of five thousand mill hands on the Friday preceding the hartal, he advised them to participate in the movement only with the express permission of their employers.³⁸ The Mahatma subsequently admitted his reluctance to involve the mill workers at all, yet his failure to make an open declaration to this effect indicates the extent to which he had to contend with the new visibility of labour on the urban political scene.³⁹

The Mahatma envisaged the hartal as a low key day of mourning which should not appear as an attempt to 'put any pressure upon Government'.⁴⁰ However Horniman and other members of the Satyagraha Sabha insisted on the inclusion of public speeches and processions, effectively making a bid to transform the hartal into a day of action. Gandhi finally agreed on condition that the processions took place quietly and the speeches were listened to 'in silence'. Thus "National Humiliation Day" in Bombay city was marked by a negotiated amalgam of Gandhian techniques of 'self purification' and urban forms of popular protest--demonstrations, processions, public speeches--which had been gathering momentum over the latter part of the war years.

Specifically Gandhian rituals on 6 April⁴¹ included the early morning purificatory bath in the sea at Chowpatty, designed to cleanse the mind and body from the

³⁷GOI Home Pol.D Proceedings, March 1921, 8.

³⁸Source Material..., vol. iii, p. 109.

³⁹During the general textile strike of January-February, over 150, 000 workers demonstrated on the streets of the city for 12 days, a situation described by the Bombay government as 'unprecedented in Bombay'. Mill hands were joined by striking municipal, tramway, and Mint workers. GOB Home Special to GOI Home, February 1919; GOB Home Special to GOI Commerce and Industry, 17 January 1919. GOB Confidential Proceedings 1919, pp. 23, 32-33.

⁴⁰Source Material.. , p. 107.

⁴¹This account of the Rowlatt Satyagraha in Bombay city is drawn from the *Bombay Chronicle*, 7-15 April 1919; the *Times of India*, 7 April 1919; *Young India*, 9 April 1919; *Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1919, pp. 265-66. See also Masselos, *Some Aspects of Bombay city Politics..*, in Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics..*, pp. 145-88.

attachments of the “impure” material world. Gandhi’s address to the crowd⁴² which had gathered around him following the sea bath was very much a continuation of this theme: a cautious reminder of the necessity of attaining ‘the necessary standard of knowledge and discipline’ in satyagraha before citizens were fully able to undertake mass civil disobedience: ‘..It is..necessary for us till we are sufficiently disciplined and till the spirit of Satyagraha has permeated large bodies of men and women to obey all regulations regarding processions and gatherings. Whilst we disobey certain selected laws it is incumbent on us to show our law-abiding character by respecting all other laws.’

As the crowd made its way from Chowpatty to the nearby Madhav Bag temple, people on both sides of the procession-route strained to gain Gandhi’s *darshan*. Another novel feature was the role of the Volunteers who led the procession in solemn silence, a small group of them holding black and red banners aloft with the inscription ‘Mourn for Justice’ written in Gujarati and English.

Essentially however, the Rowlatt satyagraha was closer in spirit to a mass general strike and can be seen as the culmination of protests against the deterioration of urban life which had accompanied Bombay’s participation in the war. The organisational success of the 6 April hartal in Bombay owed less to Gandhi than to the activities of the “Chronicle group” around Horniman who skilfully presented the new legislation not as a unique, one-off event, but as integral to the hegemony of a colonial order ultimately responsible for the many grievances of city life. Rowlatt was constructed as a symbol of everything that was wrong about how both Bombay and India were governed, enabling a large number of citizens to take to the streets in an unprecedented demonstration of public dissent.

Once again, the circulation of texts and the impact of oral speeches fuelled rumours through which the abstract issue of civil rights was made meaningful to the everyday lives of citizens. In particular, they appear to have reconstructed Rowlatt as a threat to

⁴²Read out by his faithful lieutenant during the Rowlatt satyagraha, Jamnadas Dwarkadas.

the freedom of convivial community life in the city as a result of this granting of 'tyrannical powers to the police'. It was believed that the police, the most immediate daily oppressors of citizens, were now empowered to break up all social gatherings, weddings, funerals, 'or even a meeting of three friends at the roadside', arrest individuals without warrant and lock them up in jail. Credence was also given to stories that the colonial state could now levy 'a wedding tax of half the bride's dowry'. This perceived threat to the domestic realm of community probably secured a wider street mobilization than Gandhi had envisaged. In vain did the Bombay government hastily put out an English pamphlet, subsequently translated into Gujarati and Marathi, which had virtually no effect in combatting these 'most prevalent' rumours.⁴³

Approximately eighty percent of shops and businesses in the city remained closed, including the cloth, meat, fish, and vegetable markets. Apart from merchants and small traders, those who abstained from work on a large scale also included *mehtas* and clerks, taxi and hackney victoria drivers, hawkers and various street vendors, barbers and *dhobis*. Moreover, while only eleven of the eighty cotton mills closed, this must be seen in the context of the recent concessions extracted from the millowners following the general strike of January; mill hands must have hesitated to stay away from their factories once more, particularly as Gandhi's ambivalent appeal placed them somewhat at the mercy of their employers.

Nonetheless, mill hands, postal workers, tram drivers and conductors, were among the large crowds which attended the public meetings in different parts of the city in the afternoon and evening. Indeed, it was these events which the *Chronicle* regarded, in terms of numbers, as 'the greatest feature of the Satyagraha Day' emphasizing that '..never in the political history of Bombay had there been so many meetings held on one and the same day..' The various speeches in Gujarati, Hindustani, and English, were, in the words of the CID, 'distinctly exciting' and anti-Government, including 'a suggestion that the British Empire must fall like a spray from a fountain'.

⁴³GOI Home Political A Proceedings, July 1919, 69-70. The pamphlet was entitled *The Rowlatt Act. Its origin, scope and object*.

At French Bridge 'the crowd was so great that the speakers could not make themselves heard' and two overflow meetings became necessary. For the first time too, here, a representative of the Labour Party, John Scurr, was among the crowd, suggesting the wider ramifications of the event; his presence, Horniman hoped, 'should be able to give the lie to any garbled versions that might be sent to England by lying news agencies and correspondents'.⁴⁴

Perhaps the single most exciting event of the day was the Hindu-Muslim fraternisation which occurred at the Sonapur Masjid, where for the first time in the city, Hindus were welcomed into a Muslim place of worship.⁴⁵ The CID described this as 'a very remarkable affair which appears to have been carefully stage-managed'. This was probably true, in the sense that the predominantly Hindu crowd outside the Madhav Bag temple were clearly directed towards the Grant Road mosque on the pretext of a Muslim 'anti-Satyagraha meeting' only to find themselves welcomed with open arms on reaching their destination. These scenes represented a re-enactment of events at the Juma Masjid in Delhi on 31 March when Hindus had been invited to join in the funeral service of the Muslim 'satyagrahi martyrs' killed by police fire the previous day, and had helped carry the bodies to burial.

But if the scenes at the Sonapur Masjid had a theatrical quality, it was drama of a highly original and creative genre. The streets of central Bombay took on the character of an urban stage for an experimental play designed to question and open up received ideas about accustomed sacred space. Such implicit questioning of the separateness and

⁴⁴A clear reference to Reuter's. In London, the influential *Daily Herald* which the CID accused of being 'financed largely from India' issued a feature length 'Appeal to British Workers' to demonstrate in support of Indian attempts to repeal the Rowlatt Act. *DCI Reports*, June 1919.

⁴⁵Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, and other leaders were invited by the Maulvi to address the joint congregation from the *minar* of the Masjid. While Gandhi simply 'appealed to his Muslim brethren to join the Satyagraha movement in large numbers' and suggested that the two communities 'take a vow of eternal friendship', it was Sarojini Naidu's Hindustani which had the greatest impact. She brought tears to the eyes of many of her audience by linking the struggle against Rowlatt to the martyrdom of Imam Hussain at Karbala--'this from the lips of a woman and a Hindu' wrote a clearly astonished CID observer.

boundaries of religious faith represented a boldness that Gandhi did not advocate, notwithstanding the fact that his emphasis on the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity was second only to his faith in satyagraha. If little evidence has come to light about the play's "authors", it might nonetheless be possible to reconstruct a "production script" from local representations of the 'Delhi Tragedy' and their repercussions in the city.

The rumours circulating about the new powers of police *zulm* heralded a threat to the rituals of domestic and social life affecting, clearly, both communities. The Delhi shootings seemed an immediate factual confirmation of these fears. Moreover, in the days immediately preceding the hartal, the *Chronicle* provided massive coverage of the Delhi events which was echoed in some of the vernacular press. The emphasis shifted from the original act of police brutality to the 'remarkable scenes of fraternisation' that had occurred between Hindus and Muslims.⁴⁶ In addition, Home Rulers circulated Gujarati and Urdu handbills in the city's Muslim neighbourhoods about the shootings in the capital:⁴⁷ as the 'Satyagraha Day' approached, letters began appearing in the press suggesting that the hartal should be marked by joint Hindu-Muslim prayers. 'Delhi', the *Chronicle* was advised, 'has shown to the country that on the question of Satyagraha there will not be any difference of caste and creed. Bombay should now follow in the footsteps of Delhi.'⁴⁸

While official sources considered the day's events as 'a strategical victory for Gandhi',⁴⁹ Horniman could perhaps derive even greater satisfaction. Both could agree that Bombay had acted as 'the home of Satyagraha' offering India another path to freedom than 'by bloody revolutions and violent revolts'.⁵⁰ However, the mobilization of citizens had occurred essentially on a political basis: the press and platform agitation against the new threat to civil liberties had been amplified by the popular discourse of

⁴⁶BC, 5 April 1919.

⁴⁷*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1919, p. 265.

⁴⁸BC, 5 April 1919.

⁴⁹*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1919, p. 266.

⁵⁰BC, 7 and 9 April 1919.

rumour. Significantly, the stories circulating in the city about the Rowlatt Act never strayed from the fundamental issue of public oppressions and rights.

Horniman could thus observe, with some justification, that the 'political conscience of the people had been stirred as never before'.⁵¹ The CID indeed feared that '..the logical sequel would be a great increase in the force of the movement which will probably develop in many and varied directions...It is probable that the real ultimate object of the movement is to paralyse all the activities of Government.'⁵² At this stage, this was closer to the objectives of Horniman than to the politically cautious thinking of the Mahatma.

Against Gandhi's reservations, the Satyagraha Sabha had conceived the hartal of 6 April as a prelude to the launch of a civil disobedience campaign. Horniman's leadership of the agitation against the Press Act now ensured that this 'dangerous engine of oppression' became its primary target. It took the form of the printing, by the *Chronicle* presses, of prohibited pamphlets⁵³ and the launch and non-registering of a newspaper by satyagrahis who would, in the process, court imprisonment. This was intended to educate citizens into methods of non-violent direct action capable of pressurizing Government into withdrawing the repressive legislation that had progressively undermined civil rights. From his residence in Laburnum Road, Gandhi himself printed the first two issues of *Satyagrahi*, requesting readers to 'copy and circulate' the paper 'among friends' and promising that 'this paper will..exist so long only as the Rowlatt legislation is not withdrawn.'⁵⁴ This, once again, was a bilingual publication, in English and Gujarati.

The Bombay Government, impressed by the scale of the movement, shrank back from immediate confrontation and took no action. In its statement to the Disorders Inquiry Committee eight months later, the Lloyd administration conveniently took the

⁵¹BC, 7 April 1919.

⁵²*Secret Abstracts*, Jan-June 1919, p. 266.

⁵³Including Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya*.

⁵⁴BC, 9 April 1919.

view that the pamphlets were not in fact prohibited; it further strained credulity by declaring that ‘..it was no offence to publish a written unregistered newspaper’; in fact, the provisions of the Press Act clearly made it illegal ‘to keep a printing press without having made a declaration of the fact before a magistrate’.⁵⁵ As we shall see, the Bombay Government was simply biding its time.

A week later, Gandhi, primarily as a result of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre of 10 April, called off the activist, civil disobedience dimension of the campaign against the Rowlatt Bills. There had also been riots in Bombay itself on 11-12 April following rumours that Gandhi had been arrested in the Panjab. The Mahatma elected to see the violence in Bombay and elsewhere as evidence that ‘the true spirit of Satyagraha has not yet permeated the people’ and rather contradictorily, that ‘Satyagrahis are not yet in a position to control the masses’.⁵⁶

The suspension of the anti-Rowlatt movement dealt a heavy blow to the advanced politics of Bombay not least because the city, in initiating a successful experiment in civil disobedience, was actually at the forefront of *practical* satyagraha. The immediate effect of the suspension of the movement was to trigger off a loyalist counter-offensive which put Horniman and the *Chronicle* group on the defensive. Umar Sobhani and M.K. Azad were immediately concerned at the potential consequences on the new momentum for Hindu-Muslim unity.⁵⁷ Justifying their fears, the Gujarati *Akhbar-e-Islam* now appealed to ‘Muslim leaders of Bombay to cooperate with the Government in maintaining peace and order by weaning the handful of Satyagrahi Mussalmans from that movement’ and condemned the ‘..inflammatory and profane speeches made by idol-worshipping Hindus in mosques’.⁵⁸

⁵⁵GOB Confidential Proceedings 1920, pp. 23, 379.

⁵⁶BC, 15 April 1919. In contrast, the *Times of India*, a bitter critic of the satyagraha movement, showed perhaps a keener understanding of events when it observed that ‘..the explosive force of the Satyagraha doctrine on the body of people who took part in this manifestation (ie the disturbances of 11-12 April) was immensely accentuated by the times in which we live. They are times of intellectual and social ferment, affecting the whole world.’ *The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 30 April 1919.

⁵⁷Bombay Police Secret Abstracts, Jan.-June 1919, p. 303.

⁵⁸*Akhbar-e-Islam*, 22 and 11 April 1919. BNNR nos. 17 and 15, 1919.

The *Times of India* praised Gandhi's 'great moral courage' in readily admitting his 'error' while implicitly calling for action against 'the small but extremely energetic party of political violence' which had taken control of politics in the city 'since the death of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta'.⁵⁹ Faced by an open onslaught from the conservative press, Horniman responded by a series of editorials which asserted that the Satyagraha movement had been 'an asset of peace', potentially capable of providing a creative outlet for 'all the evil consequences of repression'.⁶⁰ In his last editorial, on 25 April, Horniman berated the *Times of India* for '..having joined the shocking fraternity of Anglo-Indian journals calling for repression and yet more repression' and for 'persistently trying to invite Government action against the *Chronicle*'.⁶¹

The following day, Saturday 26 April, the Bombay Government took up the invitation and moved against both Horniman and the *Chronicle*. Lloyd signed Orders simultaneously placing the *Chronicle* under pre-censorship while authorizing the removal through deportation of Horniman from India. This was achieved by a military-style operation in which speed and control over communications were deemed essential to the outcome.⁶²

Horniman was convalescing at his bungalow in Worli following a recent operation. Shortly after 3 p.m, the Bombay Commissioner of Police accompanied by CID Officers arrived to serve the Order. Two accompanying army medical officers hastily examined him and declared him fit to travel. The editor of the *Chronicle* was allowed to pack only a few absolute necessities and within the hour, he was on his way to Alexandra Docks in a shuttered ambulance where the steamer *S.S Takada* was anchored. By 4.30 he was installed on board, under armed guard, to await departure for

⁵⁹*The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 30 April 1919.

⁶⁰*BC*, 12 April 1919.

⁶¹*BC*, 25 April 1919.

⁶²This account of Horniman's deportation is based on *GOB Home (Special)* 204-1919: "B. G Horniman: Deportation under Defense of India rules"; *GOB Confidential* (Judicial Dept.) *Proceedings* May 1919; *Source Material*., vol. ii, p. 808; *GOI Home Political (D)*, March 1921, 8: "Summary of the activities of Mr. Horniman." See also Milton Israel, *Communications and power*., p. 221.

England at mid-day on 27 April. He was allowed a supervised eight-minute conversation with M.K Azad to discuss personal matters.

Telephone communications between Worli and the rest of Bombay were interrupted between 2.00 and 4.30 p.m, coinciding almost exactly with the duration of the police operation. Throughout the afternoon, moreover, a squadron of soldiers was kept on the alert at Worli, while all traffic on the road to the harbour was held up until the police party escorting Horniman had reached its destination. As a result, the majority of people only heard of the dramatic events in the late afternoon, through a special supplement of the *Sanj Vartaman*.

At the same time, Sobhani, Jinnah, and Jayakar, as Directors of the *Chronicle*, were served with the Pre-Censorship Order which also included forfeiture of the paper's two thousand rupee security under section four of the Press Act. The Bombay Government, the Order stated, were of the opinion that the *Chronicle* had used 'words' which were 'likely..directly or indirectly whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication or otherwise to bring into hatred and contempt the Government established by law in British India.' It singled out the paper's various pieces on the Rowlatt Act, especially focusing on its "incitements" to civil disobedience. While Horniman was being sequestered, the police were also raiding the *Chronicle*'s offices on Medows Street and confiscating all remaining copies of the "seditious" issues.⁶³

Although the Government of India had, the previous year, amended the Defense of India regulations to enable deportation specifically with Horniman in mind, Delhi still appeared to be taken aback by the Bombay Government's timing. The following day, Bombay Castle was informed that while the Government of India were 'fully prepared to defend the action taken' it would still appreciate 'fuller details' in view of the 'peculiar knowledge of the local circumstances possessed by the Government of Bombay'.⁶⁴ Both in its immediate response and in its prepared Statement for the Disorders Inquiry Committee a few months later, the Lloyd administration indirectly

⁶³GOB Confidential Proceedings (Judicial Dept.), May 1919, pp. 107-110.

⁶⁴GOB Home (Special) 204-1919.

testified to the unique breadth of Horniman's political activism as well as to the effectiveness of his particular style of journalism.

Horniman's removal had been necessary because he had managed to provide 'concentration, impulse, and direction to (the) formidable but latent and diffused forces' that had arisen as a result of 'the abnormal economic conditions created by the war'; these forces essentially comprised Home Rule agitation for a new political order, labour unrest, and everyday urban discontents. They provided opportunities for Horniman to use the *Chronicle* to 'misrepresent' the actions of authorities 'in such a way as to inspire popular imagination with hostility to the Officers of Government'. While the paper's columns had a 'profoundly and comprehensively mischievous effect on the political situation and the public..over an extended period', Horniman's own speeches and activities had also made him an influential figure in his own right. At public meetings he 'was singled out for special attention by the audiences which evidently regarded him as a popular champion.'

These activities reached a new level as from January 1919 with the initiation of 'intrigues preliminary to the Satyagraha outburst of April'. They included the encouragement of industrial militancy and a 'remarkable' attempt to 'subvert the discipline of British troops in India' by publishing '..a series of letters..purporting to have emanated from British soldiers on the subject of demobilization grievances'. The *Chronicle* played a leading part in orchestrating public opinion against the Rowlatt Bills while its Editor was one of the leading advocates of the 'law-breaking' implicit in civil disobedience. Horniman's personality, his range of political interests, and his grasp of the techniques of modern journalism made him the 'prime mover' in anti-colonial agitation in Bombay and it was no accident that his career as journalist and politician, terminating with his deportation, coincided '..with the ascending and descending arcs of the wave of intensive agitation' in the city.⁶⁵

⁶⁵GOB Confidential Proceedings (Judicial Dept.), Jan. 1920, pp. 13-20.

In terms of local political pre-eminence, the Bombay Government perceived Horniman as more influential than Gandhi, Annie Besant, and Jinnah in April 1919. As news of his sequestration filtered through, crowds began to gather in the Fort and in Girgaum amid rumours that a general strike was about to be called in protest. Gandhi however despatched the Satyagraha Volunteers to move about and advise the crowds reading the bilingual Special Supplement of the *Sanj Vartaman* to disperse and return quietly to their homes. That evening, prominent members of the *Chronicle* group visited Gandhi at his residence in Gamdevi and demanded a strong response to the Bombay Government's *zulm*, but the Mahatma was immovable. The following day he issued the first in a two-week long series of daily leaflets on 'Mr. Horniman's Deportation'⁶⁶ in English and Gujarati, appealing for calm and opposing the idea of a strike.

'Horniman', Gandhi's opening "manifesto" stated, 'has given us the *Mantras* of Liberty, he has fearlessly exposed wrong wherever he has seen it and has thus been an ornament to the race to which he belongs..' However, the situation also presents 'a fine opportunity for demonstrating the purity and invincibility' of Satyagraha. All true Satyagrahis can 'demonstrate their affection for Mr. Horniman only by remaining perfectly calm. It will be sheer thoughtlessness to break the peace.' The response to the Editor of the *Chronicle*'s deportation provided yet another test in which '..Modern civilization challenges the Ancient. Satyagraha now going on is based on the teachings of the Ancient Civilization and if India accepts Satyagraha the superiority of the Ancient Civilization will be indicated.' The Bombay Commissioner of Police observed that '..there is no doubt whatever that (Gandhi) has used his influence on this occasion in the best interests of Government and that he has strained every nerve to preserve Law and Order.'⁶⁷

The citizens of Bombay, however, remained unimpressed. For a whole week, Gandhi continued to be mercilessly assailed, by members of the Satyagraha Sabha, by

⁶⁶For the full text of these leaflets, see Desai, vol. ii, pp. 340-359.

⁶⁷*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan-June 1919, p. 336.

Home Rulers, and by individual representations, all demanding some form of protest action, preferably an all-out strike. The Volunteers, moreover, reported that opinion in the city strongly favoured a demonstration of public feelings. Still, the Mahatma persisted with his daily production of leaflets which attempted to take the heat out of the situation. He attempted to achieve this by asserting the superiority of "satyagraha" over modern-day strike action: '..What we expect to attain by acclamations in ordinary movements, we often gain by silence in Satyagraha. The human voice can never reach the distance that is covered by the still small voice of conscience.'

The conflict between Gandhi and Horniman's supporters within the Satyagraha Sabha erupted at a stormy session of the Sabha on 30 April. Gandhi was severely criticized for holding back protest and doubts were raised about the very doctrine of satyagraha itself; it was even suggested that the deportation was facilitated by the Mahatma's weakness in suspending civil disobedience. Gandhi attempted to mount a defense of his position through an article in the English (but not Gujarati) columns of the *Sanj Vartaman* of 1 May in which he asserted that '..Satyagraha consists at times in civil disobedience and at other times in civil obedience. It consists at times in declaring hartal, or holding large public meetings or arranging processions, and at other times in refraining from any one or all of these things.'⁶⁸

In an attempt to pacify his critics, Gandhi promised a resumption of civil disobedience 'by the beginning of July next' if the Rowlatt legislation were not withdrawn in the meantime. But even this failed to quell calls for immediate action and after holding out until 5 May, the Mahatma was forced to concede that '..discussions at the meetings of the Satyagraha Sabha and reports of popular discussions show that the minds of the people are by no means appeased..The people will never forget what Mr. Horniman has done for them. He has given them a new life, a new hope.'

The leaflet, published this time in both the English and the Gujarati columns of the *Sanj Vartaman*, now the leading nationalist daily in the absence of the *Chronicle*, went

⁶⁸*Sanj Vartaman*, 1 May 1919; GOB Home (Special) Proceedings, File 204-1919.

on to call for hartal for Sunday 11 May. However, it would be 'confined to independent businessmen' and would involve a 24-hour fast as well as 'private religious devotion' in every home. Gandhi thus attempted to give the observance a restrictive class character, which was the only way in fact that he could assert tight control over it.

The Mahatma went on to explain that hartal was 'an ancient Indian institution for expressing national sorrow..more powerful than monster meetings' and thus most suitable for demonstrating 'our grief over the deportation' Hindus and Muslims should have their scriptures read to them so as to gain a deeper understanding of 'the true nature of Satyagraha' through 'the stories of great Satyagrahis such as Prahlad, Harishchandra, Mirabai, Imams Hasan and Hussein, Socrates and others'.

Meanwhile the Satyagraha Sabha organised a monster petition condemning the victimisation of the *Chronicle* and the deportation of its Editor, which was signed by over fifty thousand citizens and presented to George Lloyd on the day preceding the hartal.⁶⁹ Participation in the "day of mourning" itself was indeed wider than Gandhi had intended.⁷⁰ As on 6 April, shops and all the city's main markets remained shut, and the heart of the Indian town--Pydhuni, Bhuleshwar, Bhendi Bazaar, Girgaum--'all wore a mournful aspect' in contrast to their usual 'busy, bustling manner'. While the mills in the north of the city appear to have functioned as normal, dockers, postal, and telegraph workers observed the hartal in large numbers. On the streets, vehicular traffic was scarce: there were few hackney carriages, while 'the *khatarawallas* who drive a roaring business by plying their overladen vehicles were conspicuous by their absence', and 'even taxi drivers seem to have felt for Mr. Horniman who to them was a great and indulgent patron.'

The Horniman hartal was the first public demonstration in the city of which Gandhi took charge as virtually "sole author" and it represented a considerable scaling down of

⁶⁹YI, 10 May 1919.

⁷⁰This account of the "Horniman hartal" is based on *Young India*, 14 May 1919 and on *GOB Home (Special)* 204th 1919.

the anti-Rowlatt protest of 6 April. The omission of public speeches⁷¹ and processions in favour of private 'religious contemplation' marked a rupture with evolving modern rituals of urban protest which, since the war years, had seen progressively larger crowds occupying the streets of the city. On 6 April, the sheer variety of public events had given structure to the protest and inspired a civic imagination which had brought together a representative cross-section of citizens amid unprecedented scenes of Hindu-Muslim fraternisation. Public space had been appropriated as an experimental arena for words, gestures, images, and movements to disrupt the conditions of colonial normality.

While Gandhi could claim that hartal was a genuine and proper expression of citizens' collective sorrow at Horniman's deportation, the evacuation of streets and neighbourhoods in favour of the domestic sphere of the--essentially--merchant home on 11 May, also carried somewhat less positive implications. "Collective" sorrow became defused into separate, domestic observances, denying citizens the opportunity of any shared, public expression of protest. Privileging the home and the cultural conservatism of the merchant class, ensured that sacred spatial boundaries would not be crossed and that religious ritual would be contained within normative bounds. The Gandhian hartal can thus be read as a device for reducing the impact of the deportation on public consciousness, effectively serving as an alternative agent of "public order" which was not, in this instance, wholly at odds with the wishes of the local colonial state.

Gandhi was most concerned to ensure that the city broke with an evolving pattern of marches, processions, assemblies, and meetings as the substance of public protest. From 7.30 a.m he established his headquarters, significantly, at the Mulji Jetha Market on Shaikh Memon Street, right at the heart of the indigeneous business world. The Volunteers, considerably reinforced in numbers, were despatched in small groups to

⁷¹ Approving Horniman's deportation, the loyalist *Muslim Herald* stated that 'the fiery words which were formerly uttered at various meetings will be suppressed.' *Muslim Herald*, 2 May 1919; BNNR no. 18, 1919.

move around the city. They were instructed to ensure that people were not, in any numbers, gathering in the usual open spaces--the Esplanade Maidan, Chowpatty beach, Shantaram's Chawl, Madhav Bagh, Mastanshah Tank. Throughout the day, the Mahatma received regular reports from the Volunteers who worked tirelessly to ensure that his 'very elaborate instructions to the people' were obeyed; the following day, in his final leaflet on the deportation, Gandhi's tone was positively elegiac:

*Brothers and Sisters, Bombay covered itself with glory by preserving perfect calm, and the citizens have shown by their peaceful hartal that they have understood a portion of Satyagraha..Many causes contributed to the success of this remarkable demonstration, but the chief among them was the performance of their duty by Volunteers under Mr. Vithaldas Jeerajani..*⁷²

Those associated with the publication of the *Chronicle*, meanwhile, were taking stock at the implications of the Bombay Government's move against the paper. The Board was informed that Pre-Censorship would mean the expunging of 'all criticism of the action of any Government in British India in regard to the present crisis' as well as 'all reflections on the conduct of Police or military forces in dealing with riots or disturbances'.⁷³ The Bombay Government had taken exception not only to *what* the *Chronicle* said but also to *how* it said it: Horniman had developed the daily act of presenting news to maximum effect into a fine art. It now attempted to introduce a novel dimension to pre-censorship by suggesting that not only the contents but also the 'make-up' of each issue of the paper was subject to the censor's gaze.

Brelvi, who had taken over as Acting Editor, immediately questioned the validity of this particular interpretation of the DOI Rules. Censorship, he argued, could only cover the substance of '..matters approved by you..not the place or manner of their insertion in the paper'. From aboard the S.S Takada, Horniman had written to Jinnah, as President of the *Chronicle*'s Board of Directors, advising him to suspend publication 'until the return of sanity'. This view, strongly backed by Brelvi and Gandhi, now

⁷²Desai, *Day-to-Day*, p.358

⁷³GOB Home (Special) 204-c 1919.

prevailed and the *Chronicle* did not appear between 26 April and the end of May. When the paper resumed publication on 31 May,⁷⁴ its editorial columns were left conspicuously blank in protest at pre-censorship. Two weeks later, confident that the worst of the agitation was over, Lloyd rescinded the pre-censorship Order though the Bombay Government still insisted on a penalty deposit of ten thousand rupees, the maximum imposable under the Press Act.⁷⁵

The suspension of the *Chronicle* had meanwhile led to moves to produce a Bombay newspaper of similar quality to fill the void.⁷⁶ Umar Sobhani and Shankerlal Banker were involved in the running of another local paper, the Besantite English weekly *Young India*. This was now converted into a bi-weekly and Gandhi was approached to take over as editor. Although he was willing to provide contributions, the Mahatma was at this stage reluctant to take up the challenge. He stated that 'he preferred to educate the people by oral discussion on the subjects of Swadeshi and Satyagraha' and that he would 'call Satyagraha meetings twice a week' at his Mani Bhavan residence in Gamdevi.⁷⁷

In essence, newspapers were, after all, part of the dubious "mediations" of modernity and *Hind Swaraj* had unreservedly condemned their influence on public opinion in England.⁷⁸ While Gandhi had of course himself been a journalist in South Africa, he perceived journalism in moralistically instructional terms rather than in the more subtly suggestive colours of the *Chronicle*. When the Mahatma did finally assume control of *Young India* and *Navajivan* in September 1919, significantly

⁷⁴Welcoming its reappearance, the *Sanj Vartaman* observed that 'without the *Chronicle*, the public life of Bombay was as dull as ditch-water.' *Sanj Vartaman*, 21 June 1919; *BNNR* no. 26, 1919.

⁷⁵GOB Home..

⁷⁶The moderate *Praja Mitra & Parsi* was one of a number of newspapers to pay homage to the *Chronicle*, stating that the '..progress observed in the administration of this presidency during recent years is to be attributed to its fearless and vigorous advocacy of the people's rights, and the whole political consciousness during recent years of our presidency, is due largely to its spirited and stimulating columns..' *Praja Mitra & Parsi*, 29 April 1919; *BNNR* no. 18, 1919.

⁷⁷*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1919, p. 463.

⁷⁸*Hind Swaraj*. Parel, pp. 32-33.

adhering to the bilingual strategy of Bombay journalism in spite of his reservations about English, he made his journalistic objectives quite clear:

*I want to send Navajivan to the cottages of our farmers and weavers..(and) it is my earnest desire that women in every home should read Navajivan. Who else but women will protect our religion?..Navajivan will therefore try to keep women alive to their duties and well-informed, and it will also keep men awake to their duties towards women..*⁷⁹

Gandhi felt vindicated by the quiet and orderly observance of the Horniman hartal, declaring enthusiastically that the arrival of Swaraj would be hastened 'when India adopts the example of Bombay as a permanent way of life'. The city appeared now as a promising base for the spread of his teachings, and the Mahatma attempted to use the Wednesday and Saturday meetings at his residence to build up a personal following of devoted Satyagrahis, outside the purview of the Satyagraha Sabha. Gandhi's interest in the city was thus limited to the search for '..intelligent, strong-willed and well educated men' who would assist him in offering civil disobedience at the appropriate time, and his extreme punctiliousness is indicated in the award of special badges to those who swore 'that they would adhere to the principles of Satyagraha to the last'. Meetings now tended to be increasingly screened and declared open only to those "who carried Satyagraha badges."⁸⁰

Gandhi's intimation that civil disobedience could only be offered by people of a particular class effectively left the vast majority of urban citizens out of his political project. His determination, moreover, to exercise sole authorship over the meanings of "satyagraha" thwarted the emergence of a more open, collaborative process which might well have democratized and enriched the Gandhian vision. Indeed, his dismissal of existing modes of urban protest also signified the silencing of the material grievances which strikes, demonstrations, and public meetings were in the process of articulating.

⁷⁹YI, 13 Sept. 1919.

⁸⁰Bombay Police Secret Abstracts, p. 500. Jan-June 1919, p. 507.

Gandhi's social exclusivism represented a significant retreat from the range of civic aspirations which Horniman had facilitated and championed.

When a large number of resignations from the Satyagraha Sabha followed the Horniman hartal, Gandhi declared that 'he greeted these resignations with joy because they did not signify the atrophy of Satyagraha but rather the purification and refinement of the movement.' He added that 'few, if any' of the members of the Sabha were 'true' satyagrahis according to his definition of the term.⁸¹ When the Mahatma failed to resume, as promised, civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Act, he came in for severe censure at a meeting of the Satyagraha Sabha in late July:

One drew his attention to the wording of the Vow which he had taken, to the effect that Satyagraha should be continued until the Act was abolished. Another asked whether he had received any definite promise that the Act would be abolished if he suspended civil disobedience. A third asked whether he had started the movement of his own accord or whether he had been led into it by others..(Someone else) suggested that his policy..had interfered with the good work that was being done by the Home Rule League and other associations..Gandhi tried to disperse the meeting but many shouted that they had questions to ask..⁸²

Following this meeting, Gandhi effectively allowed the Satyagraha Sabha to die a lingering death.

⁸¹Source Material..vol. iii, pp. 151-52.

⁸²FR (1) Aug. 1919.

2. Hartals, strikes, and the persistence of material aspirations.

Gandhi's unwillingness to risk mass civil disobedience over the Rowlatt issue soon gave way to the identification of the Khilafat question as a more promising avenue to educate Indians into the values of satyagraha. On the eve of the hartal in honour of Horniman, he addressed a meeting of the Anjuman-Zia-ul-Islam on Falkland Road. Speaking in a Gujarati sprinkled with Urdu expressions, the Mahatma described the likely fate of the Khilafat as a 'great misfortune (*afat*) for our Muslim brothers, and 'the *afat* on our Muslim brothers is an *afat* on us too.'⁸³ Moreover, of all the burning issues of the day, Khilafat was '...the greatest of all, greater than even the repeal of the Rowlatt legislation for it affects the religious susceptibilities of millions of Mussalmans.'⁸⁴

Here, then, was a cause which provided richer opportunities for the "spiritualisation" of politics than the secular reclaiming of civil rights that was after all the primary objective of the anti-Rowlatt agitation. Here was an issue that held greater promise for the vindication of the realm of "ancient civilization" against the creeping invasions of modernity and its urban manifestations.

As both an instrument and a symbol of colonial misrule, Rowlatt represented a relatively clear-cut basis for nationalist political mobilization. Khilafat, however, was a politically more complex issue. The recognition of the Ottoman sultan as "caliph" of Islam, and thus as an eternal symbol of Islamic power and solidarity, was limited to Indian Sunni Muslims. Moreover only the Sunni elite--the *ashraf* castes connected to the former Mughal ruling class, and the *ulama*, who viewed the institution of the caliphate as symbolic of the supremacy of Islamic law--perceived the fate of the Ottoman Empire as a significant political issue.⁸⁵

⁸³Bombay Police Secret Abstracts Jan.-June 1919, p. 399.

⁸⁴YI, 14 May 1919.

⁸⁵Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement. Religious symbolism and political mobilization in India* (Delhi 1982), pp. 6-7.

In contrast, the majority of the actual Muslim Arab subjects of the Empire had, during the First World War, taken up arms against Turkish rule in an assertion of their right to self-determination. Thus, however dubious British post-war colonial motives in relation to the territories of the Turkish Empire, Indian Sunni Muslim demands for the maintenance of the temporal powers of the sultan were hardly consistent with the “new world forces” of democratic rights and national self-determination. When Mohamed Ali reiterated these “Indian” demands at the 1922 Paris Conference, an Egyptian nationalist commented that ‘he could not understand what religious aspect there could be about the question..’⁸⁶ Two years later, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk abolished the Caliphate in order ‘to make a clean sweep of all contributory causes of the decay of the Turkish Empire..’⁸⁷

A significant difference between the anti-Rowlatt and Khilafat movements in Bombay lay in their contrasting sources of Muslim support. Muslim participants in the April hartal were primarily young Shia nationalists, ‘young party’⁸⁸ Bohras and Khojas who were very much the products of the Congress-Muslim League entente of 1915-16 and the subsequent Home Rule agitation. In contrast, the city’s loyalist Sunni press had welcomed the Rowlatt legislation and accused Muslim nationalists ‘who go so far as to say that they are Indians first and Mussalmans afterwards’ of showing little interest in the specifically Islamic issue of the Khilafat.⁸⁹

⁸⁶GOI Home (Political) 1922, 847.

⁸⁷Salahi R. Sonyel, *Ataturk--The Founder of Modern Turkey* (Ankara 1989), p. 100.

⁸⁸Francis Robinson has shown how, from around the first decade of the century, young middle-class Muslims ‘of progressive tendencies’, generally professionals and western-educated, began to challenge the old landed UP aristocracy for the leadership of Indian Muslims. Shias were well represented amongst these “young progressives”. By the war years they had largely prevailed and were instrumental in forging the Lucknow Pact between Congress and the Muslim League. Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims* (Delhi 1993ed.), pp. 175-256. In Bombay, on the other hand, the ‘old party’, merchants and landlords ‘of property and influence’ continued to dominate Muslim affairs with the open support of the local colonial state. They were overwhelmingly Sunni. See Jim Masselos, *Power in the Bombay “Moholla”, 1904-15: An initial exploration into the world of the Indian Urban Muslim in South Asia*, no. 6 (December 1976), pp. 91-95.

⁸⁹*Akhbar-e-Islam*, 14 March 1919; *BNNR* no. 11. *Mufid-e-Rozgar*, 14 March and 20 Feb. 1919; *BNNR* nos. 11 and 8, 1919.

The Gujarati *Akhbar-e-Islam* regretted that a similarly impressive public display of feeling as was manifested during the Rowlatt satyagraha had never been shown by Bombay Muslims over the issue of the Khilafat.⁹⁰ The paper went on to publish a letter from the Secretary of the Dawoodi Bohra *jamat*, Mohammed Ali Alabux, calling on all his fellow Dawoodis to remain loyal to the authorities.⁹¹ Also condemned were Muslim interest in satyagraha and the 'sacrilegious' Hindu-Muslim fraternisation in mosques.

In the *Chronicle*, Horniman had supported the 'Muslim demand' as an additional means of embarrassing the colonial government. The Khilafat issue was never, however, a major consideration and it occupied relatively little space in relation to the paper's major preoccupations in the early months of 1919: the Rowlatt bills and the problems of urban life. Fanning the flames of Pan-Islamic agitation was virtually the only subversive activity that Horniman was not accused of by the Bombay Government, in their lengthy memorandum justifying his deportation. The Sunni press supported his banishment, the *Akhbar-e-Islam* issuing a supplementary handbill in Gujarati advising Muslims not to participate in the hartal in his honour since 'Horniman has no connection with us, and he has rendered no service to Islam.'⁹²

Sunni loyalism ensured that the Khilafat issue was slow to get off the ground in Bombay. Although a Khilafat Committee⁹³ had been set up in the city in March, it was only as a result of Gandhi's cultivation of the more radical, up-country Sunni *ulama* and intelligentsia, particularly Abdul Bari, Hasrat Mohani, and the imprisoned Ali Brothers, that Bombay became a centre of Khilafat activity. Gandhi's home on Laburnum Road became an important meeting place where moderate local Committee members and UP radicals exchanged views over tactics and strategy, a process which

⁹⁰*Akhbar-e-Islam*, 7 April 1919; *BNNR* no. 15, 1919.

⁹¹*Akhbar-e-Islam*, 22 April 1919; *BNNR* no. 17, 1919.

⁹²*Akhbar-e-Islam*, 28 April and 10 May 1919, and *Mufid-e-Rozgar*, 11 May 1919; *BNNR* nos. 18-19, 1919.

⁹³This comprised 62 Sunnis and 6 Shias. *Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-April 1920, p. 301.

culminated in the formation of an All-India Khilafat Committee, based in Bombay, in September.⁹⁴ At a meeting at Mastanshah's Tank, Bellasis Road, shortly afterwards, Gandhi fully aligned himself with his Sunni hosts and told his Muslim audience that they 'had failed in their duty' over the 'life and death' question of the Caliphate, adding that '*Satyagraha* was the only remedy for them in the evil circumstances in which they found themselves..⁹⁵

The All-India Khilafat Committee decided to observe a national Khilafat Day on 17 October, with Bombay once again at the nerve-centre of the movement. The funding of the movement by the city's Sunni merchants was a crucial element here, as was Gandhi's presence and strategical leadership of the day of action. Khilafat Day was to be modelled, not on the Rowlatt satyagraha, but on the Horniman hartal. It was to consist in a general closure of business, a withdrawal into prayer and fasting, but no public meetings or processions. However, Gandhi clearly conceived the observance as a greater test for the citizens of Bombay than the previous hartal as it involved the launch of an authorized experiment in Hindu-Muslim unity: 'I hope', he wrote in the *Chronicle*, 'that every Hindu man and woman will observe the 17th instant and thus put a sacred seal on the Hindu-Muslim bond.'⁹⁶

Such unity was to be based on the traditionalist premise of shared religious "faith" which the Mahatma assumed to be fixed and "pure", unconnected to the materialities of urban life and to competing class interests.⁹⁷ The active forces co-authoring the hartal alongside Gandhi were of a very different complexion to those who had presided over the Rowlatt satyagraha. The bilingual Home Rulers associated with the *Chronicle* had virtually dissipated, while none of the nationalist Muslims associated with the paper⁹⁸

⁹⁴*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1919, p. 507.

⁹⁵*FR* (2) Sept. 1919; *Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1919, p. 825.

⁹⁶*BC*, 13 Oct. 1919.

⁹⁷In particular, Gandhi's identification of the city's merchants as the likely backbone of the movement and as the social pillar of religious unity was fraught with dangers. His appeal to the cloth merchants to boycott foreign yarn drew the response that Muslim cloth merchants were 'poorer' than their Hindu counterparts and therefore stood to lose far more. *Muslim Herald*, 29 July 1921; *BNNR* no. 30, 1921.

⁹⁸That is Jinnah, Brelvi, M. K Azad, and Umar Sobhani.

played a significant part. Prominent now were merchants and maulvis, exemplified by the president of the Bombay Khilafat Committee Seth Mohamed Mian Chotani 'who had made a fortune trading with the British in lumber and other strategic raw materials during the war.'⁹⁹

Preparations for Khilafat Day in Bombay--the 17th: *jumma*-Friday, the Muslim prayer-day with its compulsory noon *salat* --certainly exceeded those for the Horniman hartal. For weeks a very thorough Gujarati and Urdu handbill campaign was carried out in the city 'to ensure as complete a hartal as possible' spearheaded, once again, by groups of Volunteers.¹⁰⁰ This time, Gandhi's Satyagrahis were joined by the Mohammedan and Young Muslim Volunteer Corps, all drawn from the 'respectable classes'.¹⁰¹ The Sunni press called for a widespread Muslim observance and appealed to '..Shias and Khojas to join Sunnis in their demonstration'.¹⁰² Gujarati posters, clearly targetted at the Hindu trading class--Banias and Bhatias--requesting citizens to abstain from work and spend the day in prayer as a measure of their sympathy and support for the Muslim cause, were widely disseminated. Gandhi's 'appeal to Hindus', published in the *Chronicle*, once again included the injunction '..that the mill-hands should in no way be encouraged to stop work'.¹⁰³

The Horniman demonstration had virtually been imposed on Gandhi by the city's radical intelligentsia. Khilafat Day, in contrast, involved a 'remarkable amount' of engineering: a great deal of 'organization and expense'¹⁰⁴ went into attempts to rouse the interest of the city's Muslims--particularly the merchant class--in the Turkish issue and to convince "Hindus" to make common cause with their Sunni "brethren": such was the proposed basis for Hindu-Muslim unity. In fact, none of the day's major

⁹⁹Minault, p. 73. Chotani also ran a profitable business dealing in motor vehicle accessories: as the sole agent for the "Ensign Carburetor", he promised motorists that it guaranteed a 'saving of 50%' on petrol costs. *BC*, 22 Jan. 1921.

¹⁰⁰*BC*, 18 Oct. 1919; *Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1919, p. 931.

¹⁰¹*BC*, 19 Sept. 1919.

¹⁰²*Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1919, p. 931.

¹⁰³*BC*, 13 Oct. 1919.

¹⁰⁴*FR* (2) Oct. 1919.

objectives were achieved. Even within its own terms, Khilafat Day was less of a success than the Horniman hartal, with more shops open in the city than during the May protest. Many Muslim shopkeepers and tea stall holders refused to comply with Volunteers' requests to close, and the prayer congregation at the Juma Masjid 'was noticeably smaller than is usual at the Bakr-Id'.¹⁰⁵ While most of the markets did shut down, the Bania-dominated Javeri Bazaar and the adjoining shops carried on business as usual.

Hindu traders' response was indeed partial, both as a result of their failure to see the necessity of material sacrifice over the Khilafat issue, and of the fact that that particular day was '...regarded as a peculiarly auspicious day upon which to purchase account books.'¹⁰⁶ Even amongst the Muslims observing the hartal, many did not heed Gandhi's call for a twelve-hour fast.¹⁰⁷ While the idea of a joint Hindu-Muslim prayer meeting at the Juma Masjid appears to have been discussed, it was quickly abandoned possibly in anticipation of the kind of hostile Sunni reaction that the fraternisation at the Sonapur Masjid in April had provoked.¹⁰⁸ The limits to unity were underlined by the *Akhbar-e-Islam* which, while professing itself to be 'immensely gratified' by 'Hindu' support warned against any 'expectations of reciprocity'.¹⁰⁹

Once again, Volunteer patrols ensured the evacuation of public urban space. Throughout the day, they kept people 'on the move', dispersing groups of citizens who seemed to be gathering in open areas and encouraging them to seek interior spaces to mark the observance. Even the Juma Masjid was surrounded by Volunteers to ensure against any act of crowd spontaneity that would affect the organisers' pledge to preserve 'order and peace' and the spirit of "mourning."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵Sabira Dossa, *The Khilafat Movement in Bombay City* (Unpublished PHD thesis, S. N. D. T Women's University Bombay 1993), p. 364; *Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1919, p. 976.

¹⁰⁶ibid., p. 929.

¹⁰⁷ibid., p. 976.

¹⁰⁸FR (1) Sept. 1919.

¹⁰⁹*Akhbar-e-Islam*, 17 Oct. 1919; *BNNR* no. 42, 1919.

¹¹⁰BC, 18 Oct. 1919.

Gandhi and the local Khilafat leaders had two public order objectives: on the one hand, they did not wish to present the police with any excuse for intervention, but their class positions also entailed fear of the unpredictability of mass gatherings: a fear of the urban poor who, deprived of the material comforts of the private space of the home, were accustomed to using public space--streets, *maidans*, sea-fronts--to protest rather than to suffer, to revel rather than to mourn, to indulge the life of the senses rather than that of the "spirit", and, increasingly, to confront the power of private interests through collective action.

An instance of such public exuberance had been in evidence only a few days before the Khilafat hartal during the *Mohurrum* celebrations in the city which, that year, happened to coincide with *Dashahra*. Since the banning of the "non-religious" *toli* processions by Police Commissioner Edwardes from the city limits, the suburb of Bandra had become the popular venue for 'the big crowds of Bombay accustomed to revel in *tabut* demonstrations other than those of a religious character.' In Bandra, *Mohurrum* and other popular festivals such as *Narial Purnima* (Coconut Day) were still noted for their gaiety and colour.¹¹¹ In early October 1919, crowds of revellers from the Muslim neighbourhoods in central Bombay swelled the local *toli* processions and joined in the immersion of the *tabuts* ¹¹² into the sea. Hindus celebrating their own *Dashahra* festival were welcomed into the procession, and the singing and dancing on the streets seemed devoid of 'any religious distinction'.¹¹³

When Gandhi's *Young India* proclaimed that Khilafat Day had been 'a triumph of satyagraha' which had strengthened the bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity, it implicitly revealed the class assumptions of the Gandhian project by attributing the success of the demonstration to the avoidance of 'mass meetings and everything tending to bring together crowds of ignorant and irresponsible people'.¹¹⁴ Such triumphalism,

¹¹¹ Aloo Dastur, *Bandra Communities*. Paper presented at the 1985 Heras Institute Bombay Local History Seminar, St. Xavier's College, Bombay.

¹¹² That is models of Imam Hussein's tomb made from paper, tinsel, and bamboo.

¹¹³ *BC*, 8 Oct. 1919.

¹¹⁴ *YI*, 22 Oct. 1919.

moreover, concealed the fact that the hartal of 17 October was the city's least successful demonstration during this unprecedented year of protest. Indeed, "satyagraha", far from being triumphant was now under increasing ideological question as the Khilafat movement, boosted by the release of the Ali Brothers and of Abul Kalam Azad and by their alliance with an increasingly assertive *ulama*, took a "radical" turn in the early months of 1920.

The leading Khilafat ideologue Abdul Bari now refused to take the 'satyagraha vow', stating that the satyagraha movement '..was only concerned with dying if the need arose. Where, however, one might have to kill, every step would have to be taken.'¹¹⁵ At a Sind Provincial Khilafat Committee meeting in early January, Hasrat Mohani reiterated his proposals for a total boycott of English goods and for a gradual withdrawal of cooperation from government if the issue of the Khilafat was not resolved in accordance with Muslim wishes. Gandhi and Chotani made common cause in opposing the boycott resolution, the Mahatma emphasising his 'expertise' in the matter. He was bluntly informed that he was 'an expert on satyagraha and on nothing else'.¹¹⁶

Shaukat Ali's arrival in Bombay in February, following his election as Secretary of the Central Khilafat Committee,¹¹⁷ increased the pressure both on the moderate local leadership and on the existing "satyagraha"-based agitational framework devised by Gandhi. In danger of being politically overrun by the religious fervour he had helped so much to encourage, Gandhi looked once again to the city of Bombay and to its merchants to provide a national lead and deliver another controlled protest to vindicate the Khilafat claim.

This time, an all-India hartal would be the prelude to 'non-cooperation' if Turkey was not restored 'what was hers before the War'. Gandhi reiterated his support for the Indian Sunni view on the grounds that '..when a just claim is supported by scriptures, it

¹¹⁵ibid.

¹¹⁶*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-March 1920, p. 138.

¹¹⁷ibid., p. 187.

becomes irresistible' and once again appealed to "Hindus" to demonstrate their support.¹¹⁸ Preparations for the hartal of 19 March in the city were this time led by the Central Khilafat Committee with the Mahatma's active assistance. Attempts to achieve a greater mobilization of the Muslim population than during the previous hartal in October relied on an unprecedented volume of communications centred on religious discourse and symbols.¹¹⁹

Maulvi Abdul Karim Dars closed a meeting with the warning that '..Muslims who do not suspend business on the 19th will cut the throat of Hussain.'¹²⁰ Such oratory at public meetings, in mosques and bazaars, supported by handbills and posters in Gujarati and Urdu conspicuously placarded in the central neighbourhoods of the city, and by appeals in the Muslim vernacular press, were designed to ensure that, this time, the hartal was 'a really big affair'.¹²¹ Since October, moreover, Muslim 'Volunteer' organisations had mushroomed in the city and were now 'provided with motor vehicles' to tour the various Muslim neighbourhoods and ensure compliance with the wishes of the Central Khilafat Committee.¹²² Meanwhile, Gandhi prevailed on the big cloth merchants to declare themselves in favour of the observance, while Gujarati handbills, supported by writings in the nationalist press, targetted small traders. Once again, Muslims and Hindus were called upon to worship separately.

Gandhi's 'letter to the press', on the eve of the hartal, again emphasised the importance of leaving the mill-hands 'untouched' and showed the usual lack of enthusiasm for any worker or private employee participation.¹²³ The Central Khilafat Committee endorsed the Mahatma's exclusion of the textile workers, but did appeal to non-industrial Muslim workers such as municipal labourers and domestic servants to abstain from performing their duties.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸GOB Home (Special) 355-10-D/1920.

¹¹⁹For a full description of these, see Minault.

¹²⁰Dossa, p.369.

¹²¹Secret Abstracts, Jan.-April 1920, p. 307.

¹²²ibid., p. 368.

¹²³'Letter to the Press', *YI*, 10 March 1920. *CWMG*, vol. xvii, pp. 73-76.

¹²⁴Dossa, p. 369.

A crucial consideration for the organisers of the second Khilafat Day was the unprecedented wave of strikes that rocked the city between November 1919 and February 1920. The continuing rise in the cost of living¹²⁵ had unleashed another massive labour protest involving over 150,000 workers, predominantly cotton spinners and weavers.¹²⁶ With daily worker gatherings on the streets and *maidans*, urban space was once again the site of popular protest. Such appropriations of public space in pursuit of a “materialist” agenda clearly placed the popular classes beyond the pale of the disciplined Gandhian hartal. ‘In these days of tension between employers and employees in the various industries’, the Mahatma proclaimed, ‘we may not encourage labourers to be absent from work without the willing consent of employers.’¹²⁷

The second Khilafat Day appears to have been observed by more Muslim traders than the previous hartal in October. There was a general business shut-down in the predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods between Crawford Market and Bhendi Bazaar and Friday prayers were attended by a larger number of worshippers than usual.¹²⁸ However, the organisers’ hopes that the hartal would be a ‘big affair’ once again failed to materialise. Working-class Sunni Muslims remained largely unaffected, including those groups to which the Khilafat Committee had appealed to stay away from work. Labourers on daily wages made representations to the organisers, pointing out that they could not afford to abstain from work unless the Committee provided them with the equivalent of a day’s pay as maintenance. The Khilafat Committee refused and the labourers went to work as usual. While some Hindu traders did suspend business, fewer shops were closed and a smaller number of citizens observed the second Khilafat Day as compared to the first, in spite of increased Volunteer pressure.¹²⁹

¹²⁵By 1920, showing a continuous upward trend, the working-class cost of living index had officially risen to 183 points (1914=100, 1918=154, 1919=175). *RCLI*, Evidence, vol. 1 part 1 (Bombay), p. 157.

¹²⁶*GOB Judicial Proceedings*, Feb. 1920, pp. 377-78.

¹²⁷*BC*, 20 March 1920.

¹²⁸*Secret Abstracts*, p. 401.

¹²⁹*Dossa*, pp. 371-72.

In terms of numbers and social composition, both Khilafat observances in Bombay failed to match the protest over Horniman's deportation, nor did they approach the enthusiasm that characterized the Rowlatt satyagraha. Indeed, the second Khilafat hartal had considerably less impact on the city than the generally successful wave of strikes it more or less coincided with. Here, workers demonstrated their increasing collective ability to disrupt significant areas of urban life: cotton mills and docks were severely hit, public transport was curtailed, drainage workers left their duties unattended, and both the loyalist *Times of India* and the nationalist *Sanj Vartaman* were forced to come to terms with the demands of their print and machinery workers.¹³⁰

Strike action enabled a wide variety of both skilled and unskilled workers, Hindus and Muslims--cotton spinners and weavers, printers, electricians, car mechanics, and tramway workshop operatives, dockers, municipal sweepers, and *hamals*--to improve their conditions through pay increases and, in some cases, shorter working hours.¹³¹ It thus proved an effective modern strategy for the poorer citizens of Bombay who, excluded from the *shuddh* Gandhian hartal,¹³² were able to press their aspirations for a better life.

In February 1921, the *Chronicle* observed that '..it seems Bombay cannot pass through a single week without strikes, and they have come to stay..It has been seen for the last 6 months that before one strike ends 3 new ones spring up..¹³³ In the same

¹³⁰They conceded a pay increase of 35 percent. GOB (Judicial) to GOI (Commerce & Industry), 24 Feb. 1920. *GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1920, pp. 377-78.

¹³¹Cotton spinners and weavers, in addition to wage increases of between 55 and 75 percent, also obtained a reduction in working hours from 12 to 10. Motor mechanics and Port Trust sweepers were also granted pay rises as well as half day working on, respectively, Saturdays and Sundays. *ibid.*

¹³²The third Khilafat hartal, specifically called to launch Non-Cooperation on 1 August 1920, followed much the same pattern with, initially, limited popular participation. As news of Tilak's death broke during the middle of the day, however, workplaces were gradually deserted and large crowds began gathering on the streets. A far more extensive hartal took place on Tilak's tenth day observance and 'passed off without regrettable incident' amid an unprecedented level of participation by mill hands, dock labourers, and railway workers. *Secret Abstracts*, May-Sept. 1920, pp. 1156, 1174.

¹³³*BC*, 2 Feb. 1921.

month, five and a half thousand workers employed at the BB&CI workshop in Parel went on strike in protest at the delay in the payment of January's wages. They also now demanded higher pay as well as house rent and bonus allowances.¹³⁴ This was immediately followed by the first All-India Railwaymen's Conference held at the Empire cinema, with Bombay providing 300 out of the 500 delegates; here, twenty new railway unions became affiliated to the Conference.¹³⁵

A few months earlier, workers had gathered outside the dockyards to protest against the continued exporting of foodstuffs while high prices and scarcities prevailed. Dock labourers were urged to follow the example of their British counterparts by refusing to load exports of rice and wheat.¹³⁶ The difficulties associated with the high cost of living were compounded by increasing water shortages which once again heightened the insanitary condition of the city's poorer neighbourhoods. The early months of 1921 witnessed the coincidence of a virulent outbreak of influenza and pneumonia; throughout March and April, the daily death-toll exceeded 200.¹³⁷

It was precisely at this juncture, with reports of 'a considerable undercurrent of unrest'¹³⁸ amongst the labouring population, that Gandhi proposed another 'experiment' in civil disobedience; this time in pursuit of the nationalist objective of 'swaraj within one year', again in carefully selected areas amenable to Gandhian control. But first, the Mahatma looked once again to Bombay to provide the testing-ground for mass peaceful agitation, this time over the issue of the Prince of Wales's visit. The city was to lead the rest of India in another satyagrahi hartal designed to boycott the official welcome and demonstrate the strength of 'national' feelings against colonial 'wrongs'. Once again, posters and handbills in Gujarati, Urdu, and Marathi,

¹³⁴FR (1) Feb. 1921.

¹³⁵ibid.

¹³⁶FR (1) Oct. 1920.

¹³⁷*Bombay Samachar*, 21 April 1921; *BNNR* no. 17, 1921.

¹³⁸FR (1) Sept. 1921.

calling for abstention from 'the illuminations, processions, and functions' connected with the royal visit, were put up all over the Indian town.¹³⁹

This time, however, Bombay exploded into three days of class war, with the authorized peaceful conflict between loyalists and non-cooperators rapidly superceded by a violent confrontation between sections of the city's possessing and labouring classes.¹⁴⁰ On the day of the arrival of the Prince of Wales, 17 November, the hartal jointly called for by the local Congress and the Central Khilafat Committee was widely observed in the Indian town north of the Fort. From Girgaum through Grant Road to Parel, most shops and all the bazaars remained closed. In the morning, Gandhi addressed a crowd of about fifty thousand--predominantly traders--in the compound of the Elphinstone Mills at Dadar, owned by Umar Sobhani. He then proceeded to torch a pre-assembled pile of foreign clothes, whereupon the crowd quietly dispersed.

Meanwhile, the streets of the city were occupied by crowds converging from the centre towards the south to cheer the Prince on his procession route. The air was filled with the noise and bustle of motor cars, taxis, tram cars, and hack victorias ferrying excited passengers towards the Fort. A very nervous Bombay government further fuelled the prevailing tension through its heavy-handed security arrangements: military pickets were liberally posted throughout the southern part of the city along the royal procession route which was chosen so as to virtually cut out the entire Indian town. From Apollo Bunder, the Prince was driven to Government House on Malabar Hill via Cruickshank Road, Princess Street, Queen's Road, and Walkeshwar Road. Official arrangements seemed to underline the splendour and sanctity of colonial space while reinforcing the inferiority of the Indian town.

Indeed, the Lloyd administration feared that the visit would also be disrupted by another tram workers' stoppage and by a rumoured strike at Bombay's central Electric

¹³⁹*Bombay Police Secret Abstracts*, Oct.-Dec. 1921, p. 1648.

¹⁴⁰The following account of the November 1921 riots is based on the *Bombay Chronicle*, 18-28 Nov. 1921; see also Ravinder Kumar, *From Swaraj to Purna Swaraj: Nationalist Politics in the City of Bombay 1920-1932* in Ravinder Kumar, *Essays in the Social History of Modern India* (Delhi 1983), pp. 257-260.

Supply Station. The threat to the State ritual of night-time electric illuminations to celebrate a royal visit was taken particularly seriously, and ‘all necessary precautions’ were in place ‘..for the continuance of the service in the event of a strike being declared’.¹⁴¹

The politically loyalist welcoming crowds were by no means exclusively made up of Parsis, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, and Jews: they also included well-to-do Gujaratis and Marathis, Hindus as well as Muslims. In effect, they largely consisted of the richer segment of the class-divided city: probably for the first time, the possessing classes appeared to be in control of public space and, in a climate of unprecedented social and political divisions, to be throwing down a challenge for street supremacy.

The territorial morphology of the city was represented primarily in “community” terms,¹⁴² which meant that class antagonisms were understood through the dominant discourse of “community”. While there were no exact correlations between class and community, community identity also generally expressed occupational status and thus also manifested the perception of class divisions.¹⁴³ Moreover, during times of social and political polarization, some *jatis* would merge into wider community (eg Bantias and Bhatias into “Hindus”, Memons and Bohras into “Muslims”) groupings to take on those identified as the “enemy”. Thus, in November 1921, non-cooperating, nationalist “Hindus” and “Muslims” faced loyalist “Parsi” and “Anglo-Indian” communities whose visible sartorial affluence also now made them targets for the class anger of mill-hands.

Thus, the street battles of November essentially took the form of a series of physical confrontations through which various groups attempted to assert sovereignty over “their” parcel of urban territory by attacking and excluding others identified both as members of a different community, and by and large, of a different class. The self-

¹⁴¹FR (1) Nov. 1921.

¹⁴²That is as *jatis* or caste groups, the basis of the formation of the city’s population. See Masselos, *Power*..

¹⁴³For instance, ‘Maratha-Kunbi’ mill-hands would, in times of scarcity, loot ‘Bania’ and ‘Marwari’ traders’ shops.

conscious wearing of clothes, particularly caps, became an essential marker of political identity during the riots.¹⁴⁴

On the morning of 17 November, ever increasing numbers of “Muslims”, whom Gandhi later described as ‘not an unintelligent crowd..(who were) not all mill hands’ gathered at Bhendi Bazaar and Madanpura, in defiance of the hartal instructions. They proceeded to stop motor cars and trams carrying passengers to the Gateway of India in the Fort to welcome the prince. Pedestrians in foreign caps--Europeans, and particularly Parsis--were beaten up and deprived of their headwear, Parsi women molested, while several motor cars and trams were either damaged or wrecked. A European police sargeant was set upon by the crowd and killed. In the evening, roaming groups of both “Muslims” and “Hindus” set about smashing most of the street lamps throughout the Indian town, undisturbed by the police who concentrated on guarding the streets, buildings, and properties in the Fort. Thus, by nightfall, ‘while the Fort blazed with light, the Indian town was mostly in darkness.’

The following day, the Maratha mill-hands, this time completely disregarding the Gandhi-Khilafat Committee appeals, came out in full force, lining the streets from Dadar to Pydhuni. They proceeded to hold up all tram traffic and molest passengers dressed in Western-style clothes while similarly-clad pedestrians were stoned. By the evening, they ‘reigned supreme over the suburbs between Nagpada and Dadar.’¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, armed groups of ‘middle-class Parsis’ began patrolling “their” neighbourhoods in north Fort, establishing ‘at the corner of Princess Street an actual reign of terror’. With shouts of ‘Gandhi topiwallah ko pakro’ and ‘maro salah ko’, they exacted physical retribution on individual Hindus and Muslims whom they identified as non-cooperators. Among these were six Volunteers who were on their way to Parel to attempt to pacify the mill hands, but who now returned ‘with broken heads’.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London 1996), pp. 97-98.

¹⁴⁵Kumar, *From Swaraj..*, p. 259.

¹⁴⁶CWMG, vol. XXI, p. 464.

Similarly, in the European neighbourhoods of Byculla stretching from Byculla Bridge to the J.J Hospital, armed Anglo-Indian youth, 'slinging their rifles on their shoulders', dragged out people wearing Gandhi-caps from tram-cars, forced them to surrender their headgear and, in some cases, proceeded to rob them. According to the *Chronicle* reporter, 'this example of the "saheb log" turned into bandits' in turn spurred on 'the very large numbers of Muslim and Hindu hooligans' from the poorer neighbourhoods of Byculla to break into and loot local shops, before stoning European homes. Over the next two days, 'street brawls, murder and arson' characterised the central neighbourhoods of the city north of Princess Street, creating particularly advantageous conditions for the poor to engage in widespread looting, in spite of the risk of being shot at by the military.

The city was effectively brought to a standstill. All mills and offices as well as most shops, cinemas, and theatres were closed for three days; tram and taxi services were suspended, while the closure of post offices meant no delivery of telegrams. Bombay was far more effectively paralysed than during any hartal.

On 20 November, Gandhi issued an 'appeal to the men and women of Bombay', proclaiming his intention to go on a fast until peace was restored. The following day, motor lorries carrying community leaders and Volunteers toured the central districts of the city appealing for a return to calm, and in their wake military lorries, consisting of 'foot soldiers, armed police and mounted soldiers with machine guns' began patrolling the troubled areas. It was not until the 23rd, however, that normality returned with the withdrawal of the military pickets, the reappearance of the tramways, and the Fort 'resuming its busy appearance'. The disturbances left over 50 dead and about 300 injured: for the first time, most of the dead succumbed to small-arms fire perpetrated not by the police, but by gun-wielding members of the upper classes.

The November riots effectively sealed the fate of Gandhian 'non-cooperation' in Bombay. Gandhi, the Khilafat leaders, and the nationalist press were all unanimous in their verdict on the violent urban upheaval. The government was certainly blamed both for its stubbornness in going ahead with the prince's visit in the face of hostile public

opinion and for openly colluding with the violence perpetrated by its upper class supporters. Essentially, however, the events had been caused by the 'riff-raff of the various communities', 'badmashes' and 'illiterates' who had not yet been 'sufficiently penetrated' by 'the virtues of patriotism and spirituality', as a result of which the city had been left 'at the mercy of human nature'.

Deeply chastised, the Mahatma was now unwilling to consider mass civil disobedience 'until we have obtained complete control over the masses'. He accused the mill hands of being 'in criminal disobedience of the wishes of their masters' by abstaining from work and taking to the streets and issued a somewhat pompous 'appeal to the hooligans of Bombay' which dwelt once again on the 'moral necessity' of non-violence.¹⁴⁷

Yet the popular classes had not been impervious to the nationalist discourse on "swaraj", however little the specifics of the non-cooperation programme addressed their needs and aspirations. While they understood that 'self-rule' meant the end of the existing Raj of the foreign "sahebs", they also imbued the coming "swaraj" with a primarily materialist content, drawn from their daily grievances: as the Bombay weaver Arjun Atmaram Alwe was to explain at the Meerut Conspiracy Case Trial seven years later, *swaraj* meant '..that our indebtedness would disappear, the oppression of the moneylender would stop, our wages would increase, and the oppression of the owner on the worker, the kicks and blows with which they belabour us, would stop by legislation, and that as a result of it, the persecution of us workers would come to an end.'¹⁴⁸ 'Swaraj', the *Chronicle* commented, was essentially an issue of 'freedom and power' for the "classes" but one of 'decent amenities of life' for the "masses".¹⁴⁹

Perhaps the main reason for the protest against the Prince of Wales' visit exploding out of the orbit of the respectable classes was its unanticipated highlighting of the spatial

¹⁴⁷BC, 22 Nov. 1921.

¹⁴⁸Cit. in Kumar, *From Swaraj..*, p. 254.

¹⁴⁹BC, 3 April 1925.

juxtaposition of affluence and revelry side-by-side with poverty and despair. The plight of the urban poor was made more wretched still by the rare spectacle of the rich manifesting their exuberance out on the streets of the city, explicitly challenging the arrival of the promised new order through their very celebrations.

The news of Gandhi's arrest, four months later, was received very quietly in Bombay. There was 'no sign of restlessness anywhere in the city' and 'no spontaneous desire for a hartal'. Congress and Khilafat Volunteers went around advising nationalist supporters to remain calm and putting up posters to that effect.¹⁵⁰ Significantly, there were no calls from either the trade unions or from within the radical intelligentsia for any protest action.

This was in marked contrast to the city's reaction at Horniman's deportation three years earlier when public pressure had compelled Gandhi to call for a hartal. The editor of the *Chronicle* had, moreover, not been forgotten. In January 1921, a letter to the paper accused Gandhi of doing little to secure 'the gallant Englishman's return, dismissing Congress resolutions on the subject as 'unconsoling eye-wash'.¹⁵¹ The Mahatma responded by simply asserting that Horniman's return was dependent on 'the advent of Swaraj'.¹⁵²

A few months earlier, in November 1920, amid escalating social unrest, George Lloyd had felt compelled to receive a delegation of the newly formed All-India Trade Union Congress. While discussions ranged over labour issues, the delegation also urged the lifting of the Bombay Government's veto on Horniman's return to India. It stated that '...the continued deportation of Mr. Horniman is also causing much discontent among all classes and especially among the workers of Bombay for whom he laboured strenuously even at the risk of his life.'¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰*Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1922, p. 400.

¹⁵¹BC, 6 Jan. 1921.

¹⁵²BC, 20 May 1921.

¹⁵³FR (1) Nov. 1920.

Each year, moreover, the anniversary of his deportation was commemorated in the city. In April 1921, workers from the mills, docks, railways, tramways, and oil companies held a mass meeting at Chinchpokli to demand his return. A few days later, a full house attended a benefit performance of K.P. Khadilkar's Marathi play *Swayamvara* at the Elphinstone Theatre, in aid of the former editor of the *Chronicle*.¹⁵⁴

Behind the scenes, however, there is evidence that the Gandhian Congress initiated a number of quiet moves designed to limit, even in England, Horniman's influence as a nationalist activist. His presence and potential impact at the heart of the imperial centre had been perceived in Bombay as the only mitigating factor in his removal from the city. In London, Horniman had infused new vitality into the somewhat moribund British Committee of the Indian National Congress and its newspaper *India*, now edited by Syud Hossain. These had now been transformed into indispensable sources of information for 'every MP and public man who studies Indian questions' and was, for the first time, reaching the growingly influential British labour movement.¹⁵⁵ At its Nagpur session in December 1920, Congress resolved to abolish the British Committee and discontinue *India*. In place of the Committee, a much more modest "Indian Information Bureau" was set up under Ben Spoor, a member of the Labour Party which, a year later, swung a political *volte-face* by announcing its support for the Government of India Act.¹⁵⁶

The December 1921 Ahmedabad session confirmed Congress's new line in relation to 'foreign propaganda'. From London, Horniman warned of the 'unnecessary and indefensible self-stultification' involved in the decision to discard the possibility of influencing an ever growing audience ready to hear India's case.¹⁵⁷ The Congress decision ran counter to an age where effective communications and propaganda were

¹⁵⁴*Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-May 1921, p. 578.

¹⁵⁵*BC*, 10 Jan. 1921.

¹⁵⁶*BC*, 23 June 1921 and 25 July 1922.

¹⁵⁷*BC*, 15 Aug. 1922.

increasingly measured by their global reach. The wheel had indeed come full circle from the days of the Kaira satyagraha when Horniman's effective use of the full techniques of investigative journalism had encountered Gandhi's opposition, premised on a traditionalist emphasis on the virtues of oral communication; an emphasis which also went hand-in hand with a code of political behaviour which favoured hierarchy, discipline, and control from above.

3. Khadi, tea, and coffee: the urban reception of Gandhi's anti-consumption drives.

In June 1921, Gandhi stated that it was Bombay's 'duty' to provide the giant share of monetary contributions to the Tilak Swaraj Fund to atone for its 'sin' in flooding the whole of India, 'every town and village.. with foreign piece goods'.¹⁵⁸ The city stood condemned as the primary point of entry of Lancashire textile fabrics while its citizens were deemed to be morally tainted because they seemed to embody the highest fascination for "modern civilization": they ardently consumed an increasing range of material goods and artifacts, including machine-made clothes and new 'stimulating foods'; their lives seemed to increasingly revolve around modern machines such as motor-cars and tram-cars, and they allowed their 'passions' to be kindled by 'cinemas and theatres'.¹⁵⁹ Gandhi's indictment did not spare the urban poor, accusing mill-hands of being interested 'only in their own wages' and of having no sense of the 'public welfare'.¹⁶⁰

Gandhi thus viewed Bombay as a citadel of material consumption whose 'love of luxury' appeared as the very anti-model of the envisaged "good life" that a new India needed to embrace.¹⁶¹ The sub-text of Gandhian activism in the city during the non-cooperation era embodied a vehemently anti-consumerist message. To be fit for *swaraj*, Bombayites of all classes needed to purify themselves of their material attachments by reducing to a minimum all their purely physical and sensual orientations towards comfort and pleasure.¹⁶²

Instead, it was the 'soul' that needed to be fed and fortified through a variety of spiritual exercises that reduced acquisitive worldly desires and emphasised physical ascetism: prayers, fasts, hartals. The Mahatma thus took up the task of restoring the

¹⁵⁸BC, 27 June 1921

¹⁵⁹BC, 20 Oct. 1920.

¹⁶⁰BC, 9 July 1921.

¹⁶¹Navajivan, 29 Aug. 1920; BNNR no. 36, 1920.

¹⁶²In the Gandhian vernacular, "home rule" thus became devoid of any material aspirations.

citizens of Bombay to what he believed to be the “virtues” of “ancient Indian civilization”: religiosity, simplicity, and self-denial. Moreover, while the Khilafat leaders never shared Gandhi’s preoccupation with “soul-force”, they echoed very similar anti-consumerist calls: the preservation of the Khilafat, and hence of Islamic values, demanded from the faithful all ‘worldly sacrifices’, particularly the boycott of British goods.

Gandhi made the wearing of clothes the pre-eminent symbol of the ‘degrading’ consumption of foreign goods. ‘We should’, he wrote in *Navajivan*, ‘dislike foreign cloth just like any unclean thing..we should also clearly realise that the root-cause of our slavery is foreign cloth.’¹⁶³ Addressing a Khilafat meeting on Grant Road in July 1920, he explained that ‘Swadeshi’, was ‘as dear’ to him ‘as life itself’ and the fundamental aspect of a non-cooperation programme conceived ‘in a spirit of self-sacrifice’. ‘Pure Swadeshi’, he added, ‘meant sacrifice of their liking for fineries..and their taking to the coarse but beautiful fabric woven on their handlooms out of yarns spun by millions of their sisters.’¹⁶⁴

Only ‘khadi’ or ‘khaddar’ clothes made in India out of such hand-spun, hand-woven cloth were, henceforth, suitable wear for all non-cooperators.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the great lengths that Gandhi was prepared to go to re-emphasize their *dharmic* and magical properties¹⁶⁶ reveals his fear that in the city, the wearing of clothes was “slipping” into the purely material world of consumption. Khadi was ‘sacred cloth’, endowed with a purifying influence on the wearer’s lifestyle, and wearing it became a moral duty to the ‘nation’.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³*Navajivan*, 24 July 1921; *BNNR* no. 31, 1921.

¹⁶⁴*BC*, 31 July 1920.

¹⁶⁵*GOI Home Pol. Proceedings* 1921, 70.

¹⁶⁶On the spiritual meanings of cloth in traditional Indian society, see Christopher Bayly, *The origins of swadeshi: cloth and Indian society, 1700-1930* in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge 1986), pp. 285-321.

¹⁶⁷Tarlo, p. 89.

Between 1920 and 1923 a massive effort was made to persuade the people of Bombay to produce, buy, and wear khadi. Gandhi himself assumed active leadership of the campaign: he was motored to Byculla where he sought to convince his 'carpenter brothers', reknowned for their furniture-making, not to 'waste time' on things like *almirahs* and busy themselves instead in equipping the city's homes with spinning-wheels.¹⁶⁸ He visited the city's largest *mandirs* to demonstrate the use of the spinning-wheel;¹⁶⁹ spinning classes were started in the city, while both spinning and weaving were made compulsory in the newly set up 'National Schools'¹⁷⁰--still essentially divided into 'Hindu' and 'Muslim'.

Congress and Khilafat leaders presided over the opening of khadi stores in the main shopping areas of the Indian town amid a fanfare of publicity. Particular days of religious observance, such as Diwali and the Ramzan Id, were preceded by extensive poster and leaflet campaigns in Gujarati and Urdu (but significantly not in Marathi) calling on citizens to mark the auspicious day by using khadi 'in accordance with the commandments of religion and the injunctions of the country..¹⁷¹

Gandhi linked his attempts to modify urban trends in the consumption of clothes with the success of his simultaneous campaign to bring about the complete boycott of the importing of foreign cloth. Significantly, in the summer of 1921, he used the *Chronicle* to make daily appeals in turn to merchants, millowners, and consumers to make the boycott a success.¹⁷² The Mahatma wished to see this achieved by September 1921, and realising that Bombay's prosperous Gujarati cloth merchants were the key to the success of the campaign, he spent the three summer months personally attempting to obtain written pledges of boycott.

¹⁶⁸BC, 29 July 1921.

¹⁶⁹*Source Material*, vol. iii, p. 177.

¹⁷⁰*Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-May 1921, pp. 152, 646.

¹⁷¹*ibid.*, January-June 1922, pp. 625, 693.

¹⁷²FR (1) July 1921.

Gandhi was in luck, as, for the cloth merchants, 'nationalism in 1921 neatly coincided with short-term business interests':¹⁷³ their payments in direct income tax, *considerably enhanced* imposed by the colonial government for the first time during the war, had virtually trebled since 1914; while the fall in the rupee-sterling exchange rate had considerably put up the price of foreign cloth, resulting in a loss of 'some thirty percent or more' on importers' contracts.¹⁷⁴ Even so, the Mahatma was taking no chances, reportedly even threatening non-boycotters with the picketing of their shops '..by Volunteers drawn from the Untouchable classes'.¹⁷⁵

Gandhi's pressure on members of a class amongst whom, after all, could be counted his most loyal supporters, immediately paid dividends: in a year, imports of foreign cloth into Bombay fell from 1,492 million yards in 1920-21 to 1,080 in 1921-22.¹⁷⁶ With the Mahatma now also encouraging millowners to play their part in the promotion of khadi, this now led to a rise, within a few months, in mill-manufactured "khadi" yarn from 4-5 annas to Rs.1-1.50 a yard.¹⁷⁷ Since many Bombay mills did not use foreign yarn in the first place, Swadeshi immediately brought millowners huge profits especially as some of them resorted to 'deliberately turning out coarse cloth badly woven in imitation of khadi..'¹⁷⁸

Gandhi was accused of effectively imposing an indefinite 'heavy tax..upon home consumers for the benefit of a small section of home producers'.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, khadi garments were beyond the means of the vast majority of low-waged citizens. Not only could they not afford the pure hand-spun khaddar dhoti, but even the thirty percent cheaper factory-made "khadi" cloth was generally still too expensive.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³Sarkar, p. 207.

¹⁷⁴Gordon, pp. 24, 161.

¹⁷⁵FR (2) June 1921.

¹⁷⁶Kooiman, *Bombay Communists..*, p. 1227.

¹⁷⁷*Indu Prakash*, 20 Aug. 1921; BNNR no. 35, 1921.

¹⁷⁸S. Bhattacharya, *Cotton Mills and Spinning Wheels. Swadeshi and the Indian Capitalist Class 1920-22*, in *EPW* no. 47 (1976), p. 1832.

¹⁷⁹BC, 9 Aug. 1921.

¹⁸⁰Bhattacharya, *ibid.*

Unlike merchants and millowners, the city's highly skilled Muslim handloom weavers, the *Momins*, the very group of artisanal producers whom the Mahatma wished to see restored to their 'former position of pre-eminence', were less amenable to persuasion. In July 1921, a delegation called on Mohamed Ali at Khilafat House, Mazagaon, to explain their difficulties. In response to the latter's remarks that 'he could not understand what objection the weavers could have to using Indian-made yarn', the weaver Mahomed Isa abruptly pointed out that the fundamental issue for them '..was whether they could make a comfortable living by using Indian yarn; they were not prepared to wreck their business merely on the promises of some leaders that they would secure custom for them.' To Mohamed Ali's consternation, the *Momins* refused to give a pledge of boycott, merely agreeing to experiment with Indian yarn for a period of time and ascertain whether or not they could make a living out of it.¹⁸¹

Congress and Khilafat Volunteers hawked khaddar through the streets,¹⁸² while Khadi Exhibitions were regularly held in open spaces such as Madhav Bagh.¹⁸³ Volunteers shouting 'Bande Mataram' also went round the city's prosperous neighbourhoods in search of foreign clothes which were collected in bullock carts, ready to be consigned to the bonfire.¹⁸⁴ Gandhi described the ceremonial rituals of clothes' burning, such as the bonfire outside the Elphinstone Mill on the day of the Prince of Wales's arrival, as 'noble' and 'inspiring'. On this occasion, the clothing was arranged in a circle, with the most beautiful, colourful saris prominently displayed. He attached particular value to the public burning of attractive clothes--'the finest sarees, shirts and jackets'--which he viewed as serving to liberate audiences from the shackles of "sinful" desires. Anticipating criticism in a city so deeply marked by poverty, Gandhi asserted that '..it would have been a crime to have given such things to the

¹⁸¹*Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1921, p. 1147.

¹⁸²*FR* (1) Dec. 1922.

¹⁸³*Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1922, p. 1252.

¹⁸⁴*ibid.*, p. 1303.

poor. The dress of the middle classes has undergone such a transformation that it was not fit to be given to poor people.’¹⁸⁵

Yet, while premised on colonial relations of exploitation, the British introduction of cheap machine-made versions of the finely textured traditional Indian fabrics had nonetheless made these increasingly accessible to the poorer classes. The new range of bright colours made possible by the use of aniline dyes had a particularly strong popular appeal.¹⁸⁶ Contemporaries were vividly struck by the rich colourfulness of women’s attire on the streets, which contributed to making Bombay one of the most visually striking cities in the world.¹⁸⁷

Indeed, the Mahatma quickly perceived women as the chief obstacle to his Swadeshi plans in Bombay, and his appeals to them alternated between attempted cajolery and harsh admonishment. Whereas he had been prepared, in 1919, to tone down the first “Khadi Vow” ‘to suit the fashionable sisters of Bombay’,¹⁸⁸ by the summer of 1921, the Mahatma was placing the entire burden of the success of Swadeshi squarely on their shoulders. If women, he pondered bitterly in *Young India*, did not ‘shake off their fascination for foreign cloth’ and insisted ‘on having dreadfully coloured saris, satins and muslins’, what could ‘poor men’ do?¹⁸⁹

In spite of the often overwhelming moral pressure, however, the majority of the women of Bombay firmly rejected khadi—at least in the heavy, coarse, white, and undecorated form favoured by the Mahatma. In October 1921, at the height of Gandhi’s campaign in the city, out of an audience of ten thousand spectators who had turned out for a ritual bonfire of foreign clothes at the Elphinstone Mill, there were only two hundred women. While virtually all the men wore Gandhi-caps, only twenty women were clad in khaddar.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ibid., p. 1147; *YI*, 11 Aug. 1921.

¹⁸⁶Tarlo, p. 46.

¹⁸⁷Edwardes, *By-Ways of Bombay*., p. 6.

¹⁸⁸M. K Gandhi, *Khadi* (Ahmedabad 1955), p. 1.

¹⁸⁹*CWMG*, vol. xxi, p. 293.

¹⁹⁰*Source Material*., vol. iii, p. 442.

Six months later, following the Mahatma's arrest, Sarojini Naidu embarked on a speaking tour of the city designed to keep up the pressure on women to use khaddar. She stated that '...women complain that khaddar was too heavy to wear, but in Bombay now many rich women were wearing khaddar, spinning yarn, and selling khadi clothes..hence they had no excuse for not wearing it.'¹⁹¹

However, whether in domestic or labouring contexts, the desire for light, comfortable clothing could not be dismissed so easily, while in a colourfully-dressed city, lower-caste Hindu women might also have been instinctively rebelling against the mournful associations of plain white khadi. Indeed, Sarojini Naidu omitted to mention the fact that she herself never wore plain coarse khadi, preferring her 'rich Indian silks'.¹⁹² As Gandhi himself admitted, sales at the main Khadi Bhandar Store in Girgaum were plummeting: from a value of Rs.18,000 in July 1921 to just Rs.7000 in September.¹⁹³

Indeed, the Mahatma's austere and purist view of sartorial propriety underestimated the active and fluid strategies through which women were transforming European fabrics into Indian styles. As Emma Tarlo has shown, while retaining the distinctive sari, 'they simultaneously followed European fashions in fabrics, colours and designs, thereby incorporating the latest trends from Europe and giving them a new Indian form.'¹⁹⁴ Bombay was at the heart of this process of modernist cultural reappropriation with the locally-based National Council of Women, set up in 1921, taking the initiative to produce a variety of coloured, printed and decorated khaddar saris, quietly subverting the Gandhian creed.¹⁹⁵ In contrast, the invented traditionalism of khadi derived its meaning as a "natural Indian" product entirely from its opposition

¹⁹¹*Secret Abstracts*, Jan.-June 1922, p. 547.

¹⁹²Tarlo, p. 111.

¹⁹³*Source Material...*, p. 445.

¹⁹⁴Tarlo, p. 46.

¹⁹⁵*ibid.*, p. 111.

to machine-made Western manufactures; this meaning was thus indirectly produced by the very forces that khadi set out to counter.¹⁹⁶

While Gandhi attached overriding importance to the boycott of foreign cloth, “radical” Khilafat leaders such as Abdul Bari and Hasrat Mohani pressed him to extend the boycott to cover all British goods imported into India. The Mahatma initially resisted these calls¹⁹⁷ on the grounds of both practicability and a concern not to appear too politically extreme, but at the Calcutta Special Congress in September 1920, the ‘boycott of foreign goods’ found a place in the non-cooperation programme. While apologising for its inclusion, Gandhi clearly regarded the measure as another powerful stimulus against the ‘galloping consumption’ of urban life.¹⁹⁸ If the boycott ‘stimulates us to sacrifice our luxuries and superfluities’, he wrote in *Young India*, ‘it would have served a good purpose’.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, ‘every non-cooperator’ was ‘in duty bound to simplify his or her wants and dispense with all luxuries that are dependent on the use of foreign articles.’²⁰⁰

From the start, however, Bombay merchants vigorously opposed the complete stopping of indent for foreign goods, as did the local Khilafat Committee.²⁰¹ Eventually, even the Congress Economic Boycott Committee came to favour a boycott ‘by degrees’.²⁰² The Khilafat Committee pointed out that ‘more than 76 percent of the Bombay Muslim merchants have dealings in English goods and if boycott is enforced, it would spell ruin to them all’, adding that ‘the costs of producing Indian goods to replace the goods boycotted would raise prices to such an extent as to make it

¹⁹⁶Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford 1987), p. 114.

¹⁹⁷In explaining his concerns and in offering advice to Khilafatists on the subject, Gandhi tended to use English newspapers or the English columns of bilingual papers. He was accused by the *Praja Mitra & Parsi* of fearing a loss of popularity and his position as leader of the movement if he expressed his views on boycott through the vernaculars. *Praja Mitra & Parsi*, 10 March 1920; *BNNR* no. 11, 1920.

¹⁹⁸*BC*, 17 Oct. 1921.

¹⁹⁹*YI*, 15 Sept. 1920.

²⁰⁰*ibid.*

²⁰¹*FRs* (2) Dec. 1919 and (2) May 1921.

²⁰²Bhattacharya, p. 1832.

impossible for the poorer classes, including the lower middle class, to purchase such goods.’²⁰³

Some nationalist newspapers also voiced concerns, pointing out, for instance that ‘there are British goods such as books, newspapers, several medicines, and medical and scientific instruments which it does good to the country not to boycott.’²⁰⁴ Close to the city’s Bania merchants, the *Gujarati* warned that ‘the daily life of the entire population is bound up with the imports of foreign goods in some form or other’ and that citizens currently had no available alternatives to articles such as ‘sugar, paper, matches, kerosine, petrol, glassware, soap, needles..., pencils, pens.’²⁰⁵

No doubt, both the trade in, and consumption of, foreign goods were generally restricted to the affluent few in the city; while the colonial structure of the economy meant that indigeneous manufacturing of modern products, such as Birla Brothers’ bicycle factory in Worli,²⁰⁶ was still very rare. Nonetheless, both as traders and professionals, Indians were on a day-to-day basis engaged in increasing the scope and demand for the products of the new age. This is borne out by a foray into virtually any commercial neighbourhood at the heart of the Indian town in the early 1920s.

Adjoining premises on just a portion of Kalbadevi Road, between the junctions of Princess Street and New Hanuman Lane, were, for instance, occupied by the ‘Kalbadevi Shorthand and Typewriting Institute’, P. Gomes & Co., ‘Artists & Photographers’, Khilji & Sons, ‘Electric Contractors’, M. Rabadi & Co., ‘Tea and Coffee Merchants’, ‘Dinshal & Menesse Cycle Mart’, F. H Katrak & Co., ‘Dealers in Cinematograph & Films’, K. L Mehta & Co. ‘Dealers in Electrical Goods’, and Gopal Narayan & Co., ‘Booksellers & Publishers..’²⁰⁷

Indians were now dealers in Reinforced Concrete, motor vehicles, film, photographic, and lighting equipment, clothes, furniture, tea and coffee, watches and

²⁰³Dossa, p. 338.

²⁰⁴*New Times*, 19 Sept. 1923; *BNNR* no. 38, 1923.

²⁰⁵*Gujarati*, 19 and 26 Sept. 1920; *BNNR* nos. 38-39, 1920.

²⁰⁶K. Jhangiani (ed.), *Bombay Municipal Corporation* (Bombay 1945), p. 10.

²⁰⁷*The Times of India Directory* 1925, p. 581.

clocks, but they were also advertisers, architects, surveyors, film-makers, photographers, electrical engineers, hotel and restaurant owners, printing press owners..Two of the city's leading non-cooperators, Shaukat Ali and Shankerlal Banker were noted for their love of motor-cars: the latter was much chagrined by the auctioning of his prized Berleit 5-seater upon his refusal to pay a fine incurred as a result of his civil disobedience activities in April 1919.²⁰⁸

Gandhi thus brought his austere counsels into a city which was characterised by an increase in material artifacts of all kinds. Upper class lifestyles were being transformed by new patterns of residence in which the apartment, or "flat" was becoming increasingly dominant, by the new speed of the motor-car, by the taste for new foods, clothing, and furniture styles, and by the appearance of new forms of leisure: the cinema, eating out, holidays; this is the era that witnessed the emergence of the practice of young Hindu couples going on "honeymoon".²⁰⁹ Shopping had also arrived with the brightly-lit arcaded buildings on Hornby Road housing modern department stores such as Whiteways and the Bombay Perfumery Mart. Here customers could purchase, besides perfume and toiletries, mineral water, biscuits, tea, coffee, jam, marmalade, sardines, sausages, pickle, black pepper, Bovril, and a range of ^{medicines} ~~medicines~~.²¹⁰

Moreover, in an urban formation characterized by spatial proximity, it should not be assumed that the popular classes were completely outside the orbit of these new patterns of consumption and leisure. Even in this age of the silent screen, with relatively few Indian film productions, working-class audiences provided the bulk of spectators in cinemas such as *The Globe*, *The Crown*, and *The Royal* in the city's central districts which specialized in the 'Thunder, Thrills and Fights' genre of western films.²¹¹

²⁰⁸TOI, 12 April 1919.

²⁰⁹*The Times of India Illustrated Weekly*, 23 June 1920; K. L Dutta, *Report on the Enquiry into the Rise of Prices..*, p. 76; G. S Ghurye, *I and Other Explorations* (Bombay 1973), p. 292.

²¹⁰BC, 31 July 1916.

²¹¹*Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-28. Evidence*, vol. i, pp. 548-49. Gandhi refused to respond to the questionnaire sent to him by the Committee, proclaiming his "unfitness" to deal with the subject. He simply issued a statement to the effect that 'the evil that cinema has done and is doing is patent.' *ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 56.

Indeed, both 'educated and illiterate classes' would frequent the same cinema if a 'comic film with a favourite actor' was being exhibited.²¹²

The Committee appointed by the Bombay government to look into industrial disputes noted, in 1922, the emergence of a universal tea-drinking habit amongst the working classes which it regarded as 'one of the most remarkable social changes of our times'.²¹³ Tea was, of course, one of the basic commodities of Empire, and the exploitation of cheap indentured labour on the tea plantations of Assam had initially contributed to a reduction in tea prices in Britain, making it affordable to the working classes for the first time. Now, the further rationalisation of production which accompanied the second industrial revolution once again slashed prices and made possible the universal consumption of the beverage.²¹⁴

In Bombay, the itinerant tea seller's cry of 'chah, chah garam'²¹⁵ was eagerly awaited in the vicinity of the prison-like chawls, particularly on Sundays. To the mill hands, relaxing on their *charpais* outside the chawls, tea-drinking probably enhanced pleasurable possibilities of sociability which contrasted with the harshness of their cramped living conditions. Popular cinemas such as *The Globe* on Sandhurst Road, also now opened tea-rooms on their premises.²¹⁶ The Committee also observed the rapid growth in the number of small restaurants and tea-shops in many neighbourhoods, attributing this new 'demand for cooked food' and refreshment to the

²¹²ibid., vol. i, p. 471. Like elsewhere in the world, the films of Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd were particularly popular, and amongst all classes. *ibid.*, p. 239. Noting their keen 'cinema sense', the Committee observed that audiences were not alienated 'by the screen portrayal of culturally different worlds and characters' so long as films appealed to their 'human emotions'. *Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-28. Report*, p. 112.

²¹³Report of the Committee appointed by the Government of Bombay to consider the practicability of creating machinery for the prevention and early settlement of industrial disputes. *GOB Judicial Proceedings*, April 1922, p. 674.

²¹⁴Lipton's, one of the companies that pioneered the advertising revolution that achieved new heights for the tea retail trade, also now established control over all stages of tea production--cultivation, processing, blending, and packaging--thus eliminating the various middlemen previously associated with the commodity. *Commodities: Tea Fortunes*. Channel 4 Documentary 1990.

²¹⁵Edwardes, *By-Ways...*, p. 115.

²¹⁶BC, 4 May 1925.

‘increasing distances between the workshop and the home’.²¹⁷ Increasingly in the 1920s, tea-shops came to serve as convivial meeting-places in popular neighbourhoods where newspapers would be read out, workplace problems discussed, and workers recruited into unions.

Moreover, as tea came to be seen as a promising antidote to alcohol, some employers also set up tea-shops on work premises. At the Repairs Workshop of the BEST Company, for instance, the tea-shop was reported as doing a brisk trade amongst the five hundred employees. Meanwhile, the Social Service League ensured that ‘tea and refreshments of good quality at reasonable rates’ were available at the Currimbhoy Ebrahim Workmen’s Institute, which covered workers employed in eleven cotton mills.²¹⁸

Coffee, too, was becoming almost as popular as tea. On the streets of the city, one could hear ‘the chink of the little empty coffee-cups’ awaiting their refill from the portable coffee-pot now routinely carried by the *bajri* and *chawal* selling itinerant hawker. The demand for these novelties was so high that many itinerant vendors now began to specialize in either tea or coffee. Requiring little capital, tea and coffee-vending rapidly became popular amongst the poorer category of small traders in the city. The more prosperous owners of the tea and coffee shops also generally provided a range of other modern refreshments including soda-water, as well as ice-cream and a variety of cold drinks which were now possible as a result of the availability of the refrigerator.²¹⁹

Thus, modern commodities were not only being increasingly consumed by citizens but were providing transactional opportunities for some of the poorer sections of urban society to earn new livelihoods. Most prominent among these, perhaps, was the

²¹⁷Report of the Committee.; *GOB Judicial Proceedings* April 1922, p. 674.

²¹⁸*RCLI*, pp. 39, 535.

²¹⁹Edwardes, pp. 10, 115, 118.

“depressed caste” of Bombay Mahars who, throughout this period, displayed rare alacrity in seizing new opportunities to improve their social status and condition.²²⁰

Mahars had shown a keen interest in motors and had been recruited as motor vehicle drivers for the army in the Mesopotamia campaign during the war.²²¹ Upon demobilisation, they effectively cornered the professions of private chauffeur and taxi-driver in the city. The ‘wealth and prestige’ of these new occupations led to the emergence of a ‘Mahar-Driver’ sub-caste which promptly ceased inter-marrying with the caste as a whole.²²² These Mahars thus used their association with a new glamorous upper class mode of consumption as a weapon of exclusion vis-a-vis other members of their own caste, revealing at the same time a sense of the slim opportunities for social mobility available to the lower castes.

In 1921, the Bombay Commissioner of Police, lamenting the lack of recruits to the Police Constabulary, attributed the police service’s loss of popularity to the ‘rising expectations of those classes from which the force is traditionally recruited.’ The would-be recruits, essentially drawn from the same “agricultural classes” of Ratnagiri as the labouring mill hands, were not only attracted by the ‘higher pay and better conditions’ consequent upon the city’s industrial expansion (and upon, surely, the labour struggles of 1919-20), but were also influenced by ‘the arrival of leisure’.²²³ They were no longer prepared to submit to the long irregular hours of police work, preferring ‘fixed hours’ employment which left them free not only to attend *akhadas* (gymnasiums) or roam around with friends, but increasingly now to visit the cinema and tea-shop.

In this sense, the strikes of 1919-22 were perhaps not solely motivated by rising prices and the high cost of living but may also have implied higher consumer

²²⁰The Mahar *panchayat* showed an early interest in the concept of ‘sanitary housing’ and secured the building, by the Improvement Trust, of well ventilated, open community chawls in East Agripada. *BITR* 1920, p. 12.

²²¹*BC*, 16 Feb. 1917.

²²²R. E Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay* (Bombay 1920-22), vol. 1, p. x.

²²³Bombay Commissioner of Police to Secretary, Government of Bombay, Home Department, 5 Jan. 1921. *GOB Judicial Proceedings*, Feb. 1921, p. 385.

expectations in a city offering the spectacle of virtually daily novelties. Significantly, in addition to higher wages, new demands for shorter working hours and half-days on weekends were now being made. No less than twenty-nine trade unions were established in the city between 1920 and 1923²²⁴ and unionisation was particularly marked amongst the artisanal and public service working-class: railway, tramway, postal, and telegraph workers. Labour militancy on the part of these skilled workers who now 'almost spoke of Bombay as their home', probably also expressed the beginnings of a new urban consumer consciousness.²²⁵ It is significant that during the 1920s, there was an increasing demand by trade unions for a minimum monthly living wage of around thirty-five rupees, calculated on the basis that it would provide '..not merely the bare necessities but ..some comforts as well.'²²⁶

The failure of the leaders of the non-cooperation movement to understand the changing dynamics of urban life led to a number of somewhat farcical attempts to disrupt the enjoyment of new pleasures. Chief among these was the short-lived campaign against tea and coffee drinking in the city towards the end of 1920. This campaign emerged as a result of some rather bizarre (and probably misunderstood) comments by Gandhi who apparently 'complained of the large amount of milk consumed in tea and coffee drinking' which, in the city, was 'raising the price of milk and preventing many poor children from obtaining proper nourishment'.²²⁷ He was followed by Yusuf Ali, captain of the Madanpura Volunteers who addressed a Muslim congregation at a local mosque on the "evils" of tea drinking.²²⁸

²²⁴Bhattacharya, p. 1832.

²²⁵*GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1922, p. 669. Unionisation can partly be seen as a cooperative attempt by increasingly domiciled workers to reduce their dependence on middlemen so as to be able to dispose more freely of their income on goods and leisure pursuits rather than on exorbitant debt repayments to moneylenders. This was in contrast to the majority of the textile workers who experienced lower levels of unionisation and still strove to retain their rural connections.

²²⁶*RCLI*, part II. Oral evidence, p. 286.

²²⁷*FR* (2) Oct. 1920.

²²⁸*FR* (2) Nov. 1920.

These comments led to mobs targetting Parsi coffee-shops on Grant Road, raiding and damaging shop premises and forcing them to close down. A 'similar rush' was made on tea-shops in the mill area where the jobbers running the shops were warned to rid themselves of their stocks of tea and serve milk instead. Both Gandhi and the Khilafat leaders were quick to condemn these intimidatory attacks, and the arrest and prosecution of the Volunteer ringleaders immediately brought an end to the campaign in Bombay city.²²⁹ Clearly, however, this targetting of the new venues of popular conviviality owed its impetus to the moral climate created by the non-cooperation leaders in which such attempts at "purifying" citizens' tastes could appear legitimate.

Similarly, attempts to convince citizens not to celebrate Diwali and to observe Id-ul-Fitr as a day of mourning met with little success. Writing in *Navajivan* in October 1920, Gandhi stated that '..in this *Kaliyuga*, we have no right to celebrate the Diwali festival' and he called upon the people of Bombay to contribute the savings made to the funds set up for the Non-Cooperation campaign.²³⁰ The response was poor, with the Mahatma's affluent merchant supporters in Girgaum and Bhuleshwar showing far greater concern to ensure an adequate supply of electric power--still a relative novelty in the city--to boost their illuminations;²³¹ while in the northern neighbourhoods of 'Girangaon' more modest but equally widespread arrangements of small oil *diyas* were prominent.

A few months earlier, a campaign to observe Id-ul-Fitr as a day of mourning rather than one of festivities and to persuade Muslims to donate their savings to the Khilafat funds, failed to make any headway and was quietly dropped.²³² In October 1922, similarly, a massive leaflet appeal, in Marathi and Gujarati, to the public by the Bombay

²²⁹FR (2) Oct. 1920.

²³⁰*Navajivan*, 6 Nov. 1920; *BNNR* no. 45, 1920.

²³¹The previous year, great disappointment had greeted the circular sent round by the BEST Company regretting their inability to supply power for Diwali illuminations 'due to the shortage of cables and plant..as a result of a great increase in load over the past year'. *TOI*, 15 Oct. 1919.

²³²*DCI* Reports, June 1920.

Provincial Congress Committee to abstain from Diwali celebrations until Gandhi's release from imprisonment, seems largely to have fallen on deaf ears.²³³

Throughout this period, the people of Bombay were continually exhorted to modify their "materialist" norms and seek alternatives to their everyday pleasures. In November 1920, Gandhi told a group of students that 'cricket, football, and tennis had been introduced to make them forget their proper method of exercise in the fields.'²³⁴ Simultaneously, Shaukat Ali launched a campaign, with the support of some local maulvis, to prevent any Muslim player from participating in the city's Quadrangular Cricket Tournament, scheduled for December.²³⁵ Inaugurated in 1912, this annual event, played between 'Hindu', 'Muslim', 'Parsi', and 'Presidency' (ie Anglo-Indian) teams, had grown into one of the city's most eagerly anticipated public sporting occasions.

A British import, cricket had nonetheless caught the mood of an urban population seeking new ways of enjoying themselves, with children improvising their own cricketing implements in the backstreets and *gallis* of the city. During the nine days of the tournament, most schools and colleges, with the exception of the Jesuit St. Xaviers, only held classes in the morning, while talk in bazaars, shops, offices, and eating-houses, was of little else. The Esplanade Maidan once again provided the ludic space for the sporting fixture, with a public stand erected on the north-east corner and tents, or *shamianas*, pitched on the western boundary of the playing fields for higher class spectators.²³⁶

Shaukat Ali's campaign utterly failed, particularly in a context where both the Muslim and the Hindu teams were increasingly challenging the traditional invincibility of the Parsis. The 1920 Quadrangular Tournament attracted bigger crowds than ever before, with a particularly conspicuous increase in the number of women spectators,

²³³20,000 leaflets were printed. *Secret Abstracts*, July-Dec. 1922, pp. 1291-92.

²³⁴*ibid.*, Oct.-Dec. 1920, p. 1679.

²³⁵*Secret Abstracts*, Oct.-Dec. 1920, p. 1674.

²³⁶*BC*, 1 Dec. 1919.

prompting the *Chronicle* to comment ‘..that the sporting instinct is as greatly developed in this city as, for instance, the commercial instinct.’²³⁷ Indeed, it estimated that ‘..the enthusiasm displayed by the public in Bombay is even greater than that shown by the English, Australian, or South African crowds..’²³⁸

This quintessentially English game had captured the Indian urban imagination. The passion of these crowds was certainly out of tune with the austerity of the Gandhian-Khilafat world-view whose purist assumptions could not conceive of any such appropriation of “Western” modes of leisure. Cricket was already well on the way to being recast into the exuberant, colourful *tamasha* it now has become.

The non-cooperation movement’s descent into such moral authoritarianism, premised on an increasingly fanatical disparagement of all Western products as “sinful”, evoked a critical response from the poet Rabindranath Tagore in May 1921. In an exchange of letters with Gandhi in the pages of the *Chronicle*, the Nobel laureate criticized the world-view underlying ‘non-cooperation’ which, he stated, was attempting to foster an ‘..intense consciousness of the separateness’ of Indians from other peoples. He pointed out that in the contemporary world, ‘we are beginning to discover that our problem is world-wide, and that no one people on earth can work out its salvation by detaching itself from others..’ Moreover, if ‘national vaingloriousness’ decrees that ‘the West has produced nothing that has an infinite value for man, then we but create a serious cause of doubt about the worth of a product of the Eastern mind..’²³⁹

The philosophy of the *charkha*, he went on, was being thrust upon the people ‘in blind faith’ without any rational, democratic debate about its economic feasibility. It was turning into a nationwide exercise in mimicry and breeding a new and dangerous conformism to irrational impulses. Tagore invited readers to ‘rejoice at any lamp being lit at any corner of the world knowing that it is a part of the common illumination of

²³⁷BC, 16 Dec. 1920.

²³⁸BC, 1 Dec. 1919.

²³⁹BC, 13 May 1921.

our house..’ He concluded by pointing out that ‘whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours wherever they might have their origin’.²⁴⁰

In Bombay, the actual enjoyment of these products was largely determined by the class locations of citizens. Still, the poorer sections of urban society chose to pursue “material aspirations” even when the powerful ideology of the Gandhian movement insisted that their real interests lay elsewhere. In a sense, they were maximizing some of the possibilities of modernity though under the constraint of more limited resources. The arrival of industrial consumer products such as machine-made clothes and tea was clearly premised on the exploitative relationship between imperial Britain and colonial India: nonetheless, the actual *use* of these products by the city’s poorer citizens can be seen as a positive appropriation which distanced these commodities from their original exploitative processes of production and recast them as genuine expressions of culture.²⁴¹ Indeed, the ultimate failure of the Gandhi/Khilafat movement in the city, and the sectarian spiritualism which it embodied, derived ultimately from the fact it would not--and in fact *could* not owing to its own specific class basis²⁴²--address the material problems of the urban poor who themselves were beginning to discover alternative ways forward.

²⁴⁰ibid.

²⁴¹For this idea, implicit in Tagore’s words, of “creative consumption” as potentially the negation of “exploitative production”, see Miller, *Material Culture..*, pp. 16-17. Such a perspective does not however imply that the struggle to reverse exploitative relations at the point of production, and the political conditions that maintain them, must cease.

²⁴²Indeed, in the context of the prevailing labour agitation, Gandhian hartals in the city can be read as designed to minimize the threat to dominant capitalist interests and to the colonial regime of public order that underpinned this dominance.

Chapter four: Visions of urban citizenship: the agitation for civic rights, public opinion, and colonial resistance.

1. Civic constraints: colonial hegemony, municipal government, and the exclusive nature of urban citizenship.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, civil liberties were widely perceived, in both nationalist and “moderate” circles of public opinion, to have regressed in the city. The local operation of the Press Act, the war-time curtailment of a range of freedoms, and the subsequent enactment of the Rowlatt legislation, were all seen as expressions of growing colonial authoritarianism in the face of unprecedented demands for an expansion of rights. This emphasis on executive coercion, moreover, seemed to run counter to the global spirit of an age characterized by widening democratic rights and the emergence of new social aspirations.¹

Authoritarianism and repression were of course implicit in the premises of colonial state formation in India. The central state gradually emerged as the location of political power which needed to be exercised as much against, as on behalf of, its ‘feuding’

¹Historical perspectives on urban citizenship are as yet rather scarce. Helen Meller, *Urban renewal and citizenship: the quality of life in British cities, 1890-1990* in *Urban History* vol. 22 part 1 (May 1995) pp. 63-84, provides a useful introduction to developments in Britain.

General discussions on citizenship have tended to follow T. H Marshall’s classic account, *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950) which provides a developmental sequence of civil, political, and social rights, linked to the emergence of the forces of urban industrial capitalism and labour between the 18th and 20th centuries. Civil citizenship comprises both property rights and expressive and legal rights such as freedom of speech, freedom from assault, and equal treatment under the law, and constitutes a legal framework indispensable to a competitive market economy; political citizenship is defined the right to participate in the exercise of political power through the franchise, and social citizenship as the right to a modicum of material and social welfare guaranteed by the State. For a recent reappraisal, see Thomas Janoski, *Citizenship and Civil Society. A Framework of Rights & Obligations in Liberal, Traditional, and Social Democratic Regimes* (Cambridge 1998).

In the case of India, while some political scientists (eg Khilnani, below) have considered the issue of citizenship in relation to contemporary Indian democracy, historians, while recognising the modernity of the concept (eg Parekh, 1989), have surprisingly tended to shy away from investigating this important dimension of the struggle for political self-determination.

subjects.² It was not, however, the sole location. The political transactions involved in the process of delegation of powers to provincial governments meant that they enjoyed a considerable measure of autonomy from the central Government of India. As local states with substantial financial and law-enforcement powers, provincial governments were usually able to choose their own 'ways and means' of achieving common colonial objectives, according to the complex diversities of local conditions.³ As well as legal prohibitions, the local state apparatus of domination involved both surveillance (by the CID and police) and positive sanctions (nomination to various official bodies and other rewards such as the grant of *inams*⁴).

During the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the combined political impact of the East India Company, and of the central and local colonial states, led to the emergence of Bombay as a limited urban civil society which was essentially a "Hegelian" arena of particular needs and self-interest,⁵ dominated by the exigencies of the *laissez-faire* market economy. The legal rights which the Company progressively granted to particular Gujarati merchant communities to encourage the settlement of the islands were consistent with colonial commercial objectives: they centred on enabling civil property rights which included the freedoms to trade, to own land and to build homes within the fort walls guaranteed by military protection, as well as the right to religious practice.⁶

The gradual strengthening of capitalist land rights consolidated the market sphere of urban society, which largely prevailed over the political and civil rights of the population. It provided the basis for indigenous class formation in Bombay, resulting

²Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London 1997), p. 21.

³The Government of Bombay also enjoyed direct access to the Secretary of State, on all except financial matters. It could thus appeal against virtually any order of the Government of India. Moreover, it possessed a special cadre of the Indian Civil Service and had full autonomy in making provincial appointments. Ramona C. Lobo, *The Working of Dyarchy in the Bombay Presidency 1921-1937* (Unpublished PHD thesis, University of Bombay 1983), pp. 35-36.

⁴That is official land grants which once ceded remained rent-free and could be held in permanent and hereditary occupation.

⁵Tom Bottomore (ed.), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford 1985), p. 72.

⁶Dwivedi & Mehrotra, *Bombay..*, p. 18; Dobbin, *Urban Leadership..*, p. 2.

in the emergence of the class factions of merchants, landlords, and industrialists by the end of the nineteenth century. Wealth brought a desire to participate in the city's public life, initially as Justices of the Peace alongside non-official European merchants and entrepreneurs.⁷ Indeed, when the colonial state launched local government reforms with the objective of transferring a greater share of the financial burden of providing local civic amenities on to Indian taxpayers, landlords and industrialists secured a dominant presence in the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

The Municipal Acts of 1865, 1872, and 1888 anchored a somewhat restive alliance between the elitist and selective urban development ambitions of the local colonial state and landlord-millowner class interests. This dualism was expressed in the person of the Municipal Commissioner in whom complete executive power was vested, appointed by the Bombay government, but theoretically responsible to a Municipal Corporation predominantly made up of Indians.⁸ The Commissioner's involvement in the apparatus of the local colonial state was further strengthened when he was nominated as an *ex-officio* member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1915.⁹

Eligibility for both membership of the Corporation and the municipal franchise was fixed at Rs.50 per annum paid in house rates, or Rs.30 in wheel or general taxes. This excluded the majority of ratepayers who contributed to non-property taxes--water (for domestic purposes), lighting, police, and *halalkore*.¹⁰ This high property qualification, moreover, checked the democratizing potential of the simultaneous introduction of the elective principle.

Out of a Corporation of 80 members, half were to be elected by the highest ratepayers, a quarter by sitting JPs, leaving the remaining 16 to be nominated by the Bombay government.¹¹ Moreover, within the municipal chamber, representatives of

⁷ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁸ibid., p. 132.

⁹GOB Confidential Proceedings 1916, p. 196.

¹⁰Dobbin, pp. 144, 178; *The City of Bombay Municipal Act 1888*, pp. 7-8. The Act also barred women from serving as Councillors.

¹¹Dobbin, p. 144.

the dominant class factions strove to ensure that their respective sources of wealth-generation were not adversely affected by municipal taxes and regulations. At the same time, they were continually attempting to shift the burden of raising the revenue required for the (limited) urban amenities on to small traders and professionals, groups considerably less influential in civic affairs.¹²

Landlords strove to keep property taxes, particularly house rates, to a minimum, while opposing all attempts to regulate building in the city; millowners combined to ensure the lowest possible taxes on industrial property, while merchants were always keen to secure the transfer of as many articles of local consumption as possible from the non-refundable to the refundable town duty. Generally, representatives of the propertied classes, whether Indian or European, would unite to oppose the raising of any taxes that affected their interests.¹³ In large measure, they were simply following the lead provided by the Bombay government which had secured, in the Municipal Act of 1888, a one-fifth rebate on the rateable value of its properties, apparently in appreciation 'for making Bombay the capital of the Presidency'.¹⁴

Urban political rights were thus limited to the dominant class factions and inextricably interwoven with substantial land and property ownership. Moreover, boundaries between the factions of big landlords, large merchants, and textile industrialists were extremely permeable: Dinshaw Petit, who led the large landlord faction within the Corporation, also had substantial millowning interests; Manmohandas Ramji, another leading Municipal Councillor, was a major landlord as well as a millowner and cotton merchant; the largest piecegoods bazaar in the city, the Mulji Jetha market, was owned by the industrialist families of Naranji and

¹²Gordon, *Businessmen and Politics*., p. 119.

¹³In January 1915 for instance, a proposition to raise the water tax on mills from eight to nine annas and on the railways and the Port Trust from six-and-a-half to eight annas was overwhelmingly defeated. *BC*, 29 Jan. 1915.

¹⁴The annual amount to be paid by the GOB was fixed at four-fifths the amount of property taxes payable by an owner of property of similar rateable value. N. S. Kowshik, *How the City gets its money*, in Manshardt (ed.), *The Bombay Municipality*., p. 46.

Goverdhandas. Perhaps the most influential elite figure during this period was Ibrahim Rahimtoola, a substantial landlord, industrialist, and member of the Improvement Trust, before being nominated to the Governor's Council and placed in charge of the Bombay government's General Department.¹⁵

It was estimated that around 1910, almost half the land of Bombay was owned by about five hundred landlords, while the greater proportion of the remainder belonged to the Bombay government and its various agencies, to the Municipal Corporation, and to a small number of commercial and industrial enterprises.¹⁶ These interests thus made up the pre-eminent sphere of an urban civil society¹⁷ characterized by the dominance of property entitlements over other civil rights. Indians suffered, for instance, a wide range of racial restrictions in employment, and discrimination in the dispensation of justice: assaults by Europeans in public places and particularly on the railways were rarely punished by the courts.¹⁸ The Bombay press indeed often referred to 'the scandal of European juries' regularly acquitting 'white-skinned offenders' in the city.¹⁹

Indeed, the colonial state faced its strongest early challenge over the civil issue of freedom of the press, largely as a result of the growth of Indian newspapers in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was particularly significant in Bombay city which, by 1885, already counted forty-three Indian newspapers. This press served essentially as the organ of the English-educated professional intelligentsia largely excluded from the restrictive political citizenship established by the colonial-indigenous men of property municipal alliance. Elections based on such a limited franchise, commented the *Native Opinion* in 1883, barred the return of 'a suitable

¹⁵Gordon, pp. 77-79, 133-37, 247.

¹⁶R.P Masani, *Evolution of Local Self-Government in Bombay* (Bombay 1929), p. 364.

¹⁷I accept Thomas Janoski's definition of civil society as an arena of 'dynamic public discourse' between its four 'interactive components': the state sphere, the private sphere, the market sphere, and the public sphere. Janoski, *Citizenship..*, p. 12.

¹⁸YI, 23 April 1919.

¹⁹*New Times*, 2 July 1920; *BNNR* no. 28, 1920.

proportion of representatives..whose privilege rests on their intelligence and education.’²⁰

From very early on, many newspapers adopted a bilingual strategy to address their different audiences--the local and central colonial states and the linguistically diverse Indian publics. Bilingual writing endowed the press with a powerful tool. Such expanded linguistic competence provided papers with alternative, culturally evocative ways of expressing the same message to different readership groups while also allowing them to make choices about what to convey in each language. During the war years, for instance, the *Gujarati* would attract official attention for its strategic espousal of radically opposite points of view, politically ‘extremist’ and ‘a champion of Hindu orthodoxy’ in its Gujarati columns while ‘moderate’ and pro-social reform in its English pages.²¹ Newspapers generally campaigned for an extension of the municipal franchise as well as for greater and more direct Indian representation on both Provincial and Imperial Legislative Councils; they also focused on exposing corruption amongst the dominant *shetia* class, while keeping up attacks on the colonial state on a range of civil rights’ issues.²²

It was the press’s role not merely in interpreting, but in actually constituting at this stage the predominant element of, public discourse, that was perceived as a threat to the narrow class basis of the urban colonial regime. Even with the limited expansion of educational opportunity, the press was invariably promoting both a more critical public opinion and it drew the clampdown of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878.²³ Although this Act was repealed only three years later, it clearly signposted the emerging battleground over the crucial expressive dimension of civil rights, and anticipated the Press Act of 1910.

²⁰*Native Opinion*, 18 February 1883. Cit. in Dobbin, p. 184.

²¹Annual Report on newspapers published in the Bombay Presidency for the years 1914-1918; *Bombay Confidential Proceedings* 1915-19.

²²Dobbin, pp. 196-199.

²³This empowered magistrates to demand deposits from printers and publishers, while the printing of “seditious” material could lead to the forfeiture of the deposit and seizure of the printing press with no right of appeal in the courts. Chatterjee, *The Nation*...,p. 25.

What the press in its diversity could, and ultimately would, highlight were the material consequences, for the urban habitat, of the limited nature of political citizenship. As we have seen, by the early years of the twentieth century, the formula of urban colonial hegemony: virtually unrestricted commercial and industrial indigenous enterprise in exchange for contributions to prestige colonial projects and political (ac)quiescence, had entailed heavy social and environmental costs. The 1888 Municipal Act had mapped out a potentially rich field for municipal enterprise, including housing, public transport, the maintenance of libraries, museums, and public gardens, and the provision of entertainments. This field remained largely unexplored by a Municipality primarily intent on safeguarding the privileges of the dominant class. This made for a minimalist conception of local government in which the particular class location of political citizenship went hand-in-hand with municipal neglect of urban amenities.

For a period of 35 years, from 1888 to 1923, there was no democratic advance in terms of a widening of the municipal franchise, in striking contrast to the evolution of local government in Britain, increasingly based on elective public involvement. By 1914, one per cent of the urban population only--11,500 citizens--had the right to vote.²⁴ At this time, seventeen landlords, fifteen millowners, seven large merchants, and twelve European businessmen, made up fifty-one out of the seventy-two members of the Corporation.²⁵ Meanwhile, a city like Glasgow, comparable in many ways to Bombay,²⁶ had moved irreversibly from the nineteenth century era of 'elective oligarchy' to one of 'expanding democracy', with over twenty-five percent of its adult population possessing the municipal franchise.²⁷

²⁴The "community" figures were: Hindus, 4924; Parsis, 2806; Muslims 2578; Europeans 784. *BC*, 25 Jan. 1916.

²⁵Gordon, p. 132.

²⁶Both Bombay and Glasgow had an almost identical population count of just over a million and shared similar "image" aspirations in terms of seeking to be recognised as 'the second city of the Empire'. Both were expanding colonial port-cities with a substantial industrial population and similar urban problems seen as requiring official "City Improvement" schemes.

²⁷As a result of local government reforms of 1888 and 1894. Arthur Midwinter, *A Return to Ratepayer Democracy? The Reform of Local Government Finance in Historical Perspective*, in *Scottish Economic and Social History*, vol.10-1990, p.64.

The slow pace of official initiatives in relation to political participation rights in India was of course predicated on the dominant colonial view of the sub-continent as a static and “undeveloped” society characterized by fixed and mutually antagonistic social groupings. This rendered Indians suitable, not for a progressively participatory system of government, but merely for one based on ‘interest’ representation.²⁸ The colonial state, moreover, maintained this perception long after the British state, under pressure from a successive wave of domestic popular movements, had been compelled to concede increasing democratic rights to its citizens.

Translated into the urban arena of Bombay, this meant, as we have seen, that political representation was awarded to those making the strongest class-based claims. Moreover, as new ‘interests’, such as “professionals” identified themselves, they could, according to their wealth and social power, be ultimately accommodated within this hierarchical and authoritarian system of representation. Such a theory of political representation²⁹ was ideally suited to colonial needs in Bombay city. It allowed the local state to ‘bind the city’s leading communities to it by ties of interest’³⁰ which included substantial regular financial contributions by the *shets* to colonial urban development projects.³¹

The colonial model of urban citizenship thus entailed the conferring of certain civil rights while downplaying others, and of political representation and participation rights closely tied to class privilege. Indeed, the emphasis on property and trading rights, supported by the freedoms of movement, residence, and religion, ensured that the individualist economic motives promoted by unregulated market forces would

²⁸‘Being representative..was pre-eminently a question of *being typical* of the represented, rather than of *acting politically* for or on their behalf.’ Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam. Muslim Representation in Colonial India* (Cambridge 1989), p. 69.

²⁹It also enabled the colonial state to discriminatingly grant the franchise to “special” electorates.

³⁰Dobbin, p. 27.

³¹Particularly to the building of new roads in south Bombay (Esplanade, Hornby, and Queen’s Roads) and to erection of public buildings such as the Bombay University Library, the Rajabai Clocktower, the JJ School of Art, the Institute of Science. *CI*, 1901, vol. x, part iv, pp. 128-29; Dwivedi & Mehrotra, pp. 147-48.

overwhelmingly prevail over the development of public civic consciousness. Ironically, the internal caste and community bases of these economic aspirations objectively supported the limitations of colonial citizenship. While the rules of the market-place ensured inter-community rivalries, the values of caste emphasized communitarian obligations to promote particular group interests, largely impervious to any wider notion of collective urban solidarity.

Moreover, the granting of political rights to an affluent but largely uneducated class meant that even the one per cent of property owners who possessed the right to vote in municipal elections showed little interest in the franchise. R. P Masani writes:

*It was an open secret that in certain wards, particularly in B ward (ie Mandvi, Chakla, Umerkhadi, and Dongri), a vote had to be paid for, not merely in the form of refreshments and free rides in hack victorias and motor cars, but also in hard cash. But despite all coaxing and allurements, nearly half the number of voters did not care to exercise the franchise.*³²

Similarly, municipal councillors' sense of their corporate duties and responsibilities left a great deal to be desired. Unless matters affecting their interests were on the agenda, many members would attend as infrequently as they could get away with: an appearance once every three months was enough to guarantee retention of membership. Others would show up five minutes before the end of a session which ensured that they were entered as 'present' on the Corporation register.³³ In the interests of colonial hegemony, political citizenship thus remained essentially passive and private.

³²Masani, *Evolution of Local Self-Government..*, p. 363.

³³BC, 17 Dec.1925.

2. Winds of change: Geddes, the Chronicle, and the emergence of a new discourse of inclusive citizenship.

In March 1915, Patrick Geddes, the foremost figure of an emerging international town-planning movement, arrived in Bombay with a portable exhibition on “Cities and Town Planning”. His attempts to publicize his innovative approach to the ‘urban question’ by touring various European countries with this visual display had been interrupted by the war.

Writing to the Bombay government in July 1914, Geddes made clear his objectives. Since the bulk of his exhibition material focused on European and American cities, he requested for inclusion ‘plans, drawings, perspectives, photos etc. contributed by architects and engineers in India’. The aim of the Bombay Exhibition would be to give prominence to ‘local, regional, and civic contemporary endeavour’ which would in turn be ‘stimulated and encouraged by comparison with the contributions we bring from elsewhere’.³⁴ The Improvement Trust, together with architects and newspapers, contributed plans, maps, drawings, and photographs of various neighbourhoods, sites, and buildings in the city.

The government clearly wished to make the Exhibition, the first of its kind in an Indian city, a high profile event. A ‘Bombay Town Planning Exhibition Committee’ was set up, consisting of the usual formula of representatives from the dominant class factions (Rahimtoola, Ramji, Readymoney..). It was chaired by Pherozeshah Mehta, and also included his fellow veteran municipal reformer V.N Mandlik. The week-long event was held at the Town Hall in March 1915. About seven hundred tickets were issued, providing access both to the Exhibition and to the accompanying lectures and demonstrations, while the Municipal Engineer’s Office provided a number of assistants to explain the exhibits in Marathi and Gujarati. Social reformers, nationalist politicians, municipal councillors, local government officials, press, and students were the main participants.³⁵

³⁴GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings 1914, p. 876.

³⁵GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings 1915, p. 731; BC, 17 March 1915.

Such a cross-section no doubt represented the professional urban elite, yet for the first time a high-profile focus on civic issues was given public space. The relatively open arena of the town hall constituted a break with the closed and secretive deliberations of government departments, official committees, and the Improvement Trust. It was, moreover, a town hall temporarily transformed into a museum. Geddes's innovatory concern to express complex ideas in visual form, his placing of Bombay scenes in a new context--next to 'the garden cities and villages which are the outcome of the town-planning movement in England', were designed to stimulate fresh insights into the life of the city.³⁶

Geddes's original contribution to the critique of colonial urban planning orthodoxy has already been discussed.³⁷ Here I will focus on his corollary understanding of the city not merely as a set of spatial and social structures, but as a living organism, a live environment whose quality and health depended entirely on 'what citizens made it'. Through his lectures and demonstrations, Geddes problematized the concept of "citizenship" which colonial urban rule had hitherto narrowly identified with substantial property ownership and which the nationalist intelligentsia merely, at this stage, wished to see extended to the small middle class of educated professionals.³⁸

An expanding city like Bombay, Geddes stated, required 'the broadest civics' to achieve its great potential. Referring to the general political disposition to focus on national life at the expense of local issues, he condemned the 'deadly work done in every city' by those 'shallow politicians who sneered at local affairs as "gas and sewage", "parish pump" and "coal cellars".' Citizenship, he pointed out, was primarily about engagement and participation in the local arena. Water-supply and health were not optional issues, they were at the heart of the well-being of the entire urban population

³⁶ibid.

³⁷See chapter 1.

³⁸At almost exactly the same time, Vithalbai Patel was moving a resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council which simply called for a two-thirds elected majority in all municipalities. *BC*, 15 March 1915.

and thus, of the city itself. As such, they had to be seen as common civic entitlements 'and therefore most directly of political and imperial importance'.

Geddes challenged what he defined as the prevailing orthodoxy 'that a city like Bombay must depend upon its millionaires'. The wealth of a city could never be reduced to the money-making activities of a small affluent group, but lay 'in its whole body of citizens', whose diverse aspirations, hopes, and capacities provided the energies for urban renewal. The harmonious development of a city was the logical consequence of the active endeavours of its citizens.

Some ancient Indian temple-cities, such as Conjivaram in south India, 'extraordinary in its beauty, spaciousness, and sanitation', had achieved such a high level of collective civic endeavour. In the contemporary world, he cited the advanced German municipal sense 'which had achieved for Frankfurt and Hamburg such remarkable results'. He also referred to the activities of exiles and refugees from war-torn Belgium whose newspaper, the *Independence Belge*, 'was full of ideas and discussions about how Belgian cities should be renewed'.

The poverty of the urban working classes, Geddes pointed out, not only excluded them from a property-defined political citizenship, but also impeded the development of a sense of their own rights and entitlements. In particular, the basic material structure of housing required 'the most urgent consideration'. Like other citizens, workers needed, not 'warehouses', but 'decent homes with playgrounds'. Citizenship grew in amenable social spaces, and homes for the city's industrial population needed to be *designed* as bright and airy cottage-like buildings not exceeding two storeys. Access to cheap public transport was also essential, and he criticized the fact that the majority of mill hands could not afford a ride on the tramway.

Geddes identified a primary cluster of material entitlements which, for the first time, were presented as falling within the scope of the rights of citizenship: pleasant homes, affordable public transport, universal access to water-supply, and a comprehensive system of urban sanitation. This would give citizens a stake in their immediate local environment which they would, in consequence, be motivated to

protect and nurture. The absence of these facilities thus imperilled the entire fabric of urban life. Although he did not directly raise the issue of colonial and municipal responsibilities, the overall sense of his remarks was clear. Urban “development” could not be the unilateral prerogative of government or of a minority of elite citizens; to be sustainable it required the broader enabling base of mass participation by active citizens.³⁹

Significantly, all the city’s major dailies, from the loyalist *Times of India* and the nationalist *Sanj Vartaman*, to Parsi papers such as *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *Bombay Samachar* extensively reported and commented on the Exhibition and lectures; as did the social reform-oriented weeklies, the *Indian Social Reformer* and the *Servant of India*. As the primary mediating institution of civil society, the newspaper press thus diffused a new language for understanding and acting upon the environment of the city, precisely at a time of unprecedented urban blight. The government’s Town Planning Act came in for immediate scrutiny and criticism. The press pointed out that in its existing form, it was not ‘understandable by the ordinary man’ and that no provision had been made for the public discussion of envisaged schemes and for suggestions and objections to be taken on board.⁴⁰ It also advised that the suburbanisation of Salsette would be better served by the island’s immediate amalgamation with Bombay, on the administrative lines of Greater London.⁴¹

The *Bombay Chronicle* accorded Geddes particular attention. We have already seen how the paper’s radical narrative strategy deconstructed the colonial order and led to new perspectives on the city. Another aspect of this narrative was the discursive development of Geddes’s local civic agenda, which amplified the potential meanings of urban citizenship in a deteriorating political climate. The paper assumed the role of an active citizen seeking knowledge about, and answers to, the grave problems of urban

³⁹*BC*, 17-31 March and 2-5 April 1915; *TOI*, 17-31 March and 2-5 April 1915.

⁴⁰Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1914; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1915, p. 147.

⁴¹Annual Report on Indian Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1915; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1916, p. 197.

life. It did so by drawing on the broad canvas of hitherto marginalised and unrepresented urban aspirations. This also meant that, in the pages of the *Chronicle*, the sociolinguistics of English was being radically transformed. The paper's critical modernist version was taking the language into new social contexts, a radically subversive process because conducted from within the linguistic field of colonial hegemony. "English" was now itself a contested linguistic terrain increasingly serving as a battleground for the control of meanings to be assigned to particular keywords such as 'citizenship' and 'democracy'.⁴² This symbolic conflict over meaning was itself of course produced by the pressure of previously excluded material experiences, now demanding to be represented and heard.

Moreover, like the discursive interventions of social reformers, the public discourse of the *Chronicle* was intentional: it was designed, not only to awaken civil society into a more critical disposition vis-a-vis colonial authority, but to directly engage with the Bombay government itself. In this, the paper was absolutely successful. The various departments of the Bombay government subscribed to more copies of the *Chronicle* than to any other newspaper,⁴³ and it more than had the attention of the local colonial state.

Geddes had emphasized the right to good housing as a basic entitlement. The *Chronicle* now amplified the damaging effects of bad housing on civic life. To be a home, the fundamental unit for the creation of any genuine civic disposition, a building had at the very least to be designed to be compatible with parenthood and family life; but the very existence of children appears to have been 'completely overlooked in the construction of chawls and other forms of housing for the poor'.⁴⁴

⁴²The traditionalist, politically conservative Urdu daily *Mufid-e-Rozgar* commented that the new phase of unrest and agitation in India was being caused by those who had '...acquired higher education in English'. Unlike these 'liberty-mongers' who were at 'the root of all evil deeds', those who read the vernacular press tended to be 'old-fashioned, traditionally educated people' who had been 'taught to fear God and obey their elders'. *Mufid-e-Rozgar*, 14 June 1915; *BNNR* no. 25, 1915.

⁴³*BC*, 4 March 1924.

⁴⁴*BC*, 6 June 1917; also 10 and 25 May 1923.

This situation was the 'inevitable result' of leaving the provision of public housing 'almost entirely in the hands of private enterprise'. Rack-renting proprietors and speculative builders exacted high rents 'for the privilege of occupying squalid buildings'. Their greed made them 'willing to sacrifice the health and welfare' of their fellow-citizens.⁴⁵ The political clout of land ownership and the unregulated building rights which it comprised were playing havoc with the urban environment while inhibiting the growth of civic consciousness.

But this small landlord class were only able to ride roughshod over the aspirations of the people of Bombay because they were permitted to do so by a '..soulless municipal administration carried on by a civilian nominated by Government and guided by a Corporation which though proud of being a 'model institution' of its kind in the country, ironically enough represents only the Government, the landlords, and a handful of plutocrats..' ⁴⁶

It was on this issue that the *Chronicle* received perhaps the greatest volume of supportive correspondence, weighing in against a local administration dominated by 'representatives' guarding 'the rights and privileges of those who create..slums against those who inhabit them.'⁴⁷ Indeed, the manifold other problems of urban everyday life--low wages, water-supply, public health, the availability and quality of milk, the state of roads, public transport, drainage, and lighting, the lack of civic amenities--conditions that would not be tolerated 'even in a third-rate city of Europe', always seemed to lead back to the doors of the Municipal Corporation.

The Municipality was thus constantly kept in the spotlight and the *Chronicle* led the nationalist press in repeatedly demanding 'a radical overhaul of the BMC's Constitution' so as to transform it into 'the thoroughly democratic body that it should be'.⁴⁸ Only then could essential services be municipalised. The paper highlighted, as

⁴⁵BC, 22 July 1916.

⁴⁶BC, 23 Oct. 1918.

⁴⁷BC, 7 Dec. 1914.

⁴⁸BC, 23 Oct. 1918.

example, the Municipality-run Glasgow tramway which had maintained the universally affordable local tram fare at half-penny throughout the war years, in contrast to the BEST's discriminatory charges.⁴⁹ A February 1919 editorial on the forthcoming municipal elections lambasted the unchanged franchise as 'an absurd anachronism'. 'The people', it went on, 'understand what their rights are. They want to exercise them..The fundamental principle of all administration--no taxation without representation--appeals to them and they take their stand upon it.'⁵⁰

The continued primacy of a nominated Municipal Commissioner, 'in sole charge of executive functions' tended 'to produce the apathy that is born of domination on the one side and dependence and deprivation of self-respect on the other'.⁵¹ A genuinely representative Municipal Corporation would be able to choose its own executive staff, and set its own objectives. It would provide the indispensable institutional framework for 'civic reconstruction' and the emergence of a 'new city', guided by participating citizens amongst whom there was now a 'growing regard for the amenities of life'. Moreover, what were 'politics..but civics in their extended application to the country?'⁵²

The required expansion of municipal enterprise would be funded by the introduction of local direct taxation based on 'the sound principle of obtaining the largest amount from those most able to pay', a progressive and equitable approach to municipal finance already in operation in some European countries.⁵³ The urban renewal functions of the Improvement Trust would be transferred to the democratic Corporation, signifying the curtailment of the authoritarian and arbitrary operations of colonial quangos.

Echoing Geddes, the *Chronicle* also called for 'the urgent necessity of a civic survey that would analyse and give intelligent expression to all the influences' that

⁴⁹BC, 17 June and 2 July 1919.

⁵⁰BC, 17 Feb. 1919.

⁵¹BC, 6 Dec. 1918.

⁵²BC, 24 Jan. 1922.

⁵³BC, 6 Sept. 1917.

would need to shape a renovated urbanity. In addition to the satisfaction of everyday material needs and the expansion of public rights, it was now also time for a recognition of 'art' and 'everything that beautifies' in the making of the new Bombay. It was especially necessary to rediscover the 'infinite potentialities' of Indian arts and crafts and develop an architectural style that would express 'the life and the ideals of the city community'. There was an urgent need to break away from 'the superstitions of the various government departments' which, disregarding local sources, and immune to popular sentiments, had carried out elitist experiments in 'style' which had produced an 'inarticulate and gloomy' city.⁵⁴

The *Chronicle's* reading of the new public mood seemed to be confirmed by the unprecedented scale of the general strike of textile workers in January 1919; the culmination of wartime protests against their deteriorating economic condition, this event marked the effective arrival of the urban working class into the public arena. Crowds of workers estimated at between 140-200,000 controlled the streets in the north of the city for a full twelve days, waving banners, and attempting to influence both employers and public opinion, a situation which the Bombay government described as 'unprecedented in the city'.⁵⁵ The *Chronicle* interpreted the general strike as an innovative collective attempt to secure the recognition of entitlements to a living wage and to decent homes, both of which implied the curtailment of the unregulated domination of capital. It looked forward to labour asserting its voice through the formation of trade unions. 'The city', it proclaimed, 'is one; the poor have as much right to it as the rich.'⁵⁶

Further evidence of the change in public consciousness was furnished by some of the city's women's associations: led by Sarojini Naidu, they now launched a campaign for the right of women to exercise both the municipal and reformed legislative council franchise. Initially, they endeavoured to secure the immediate repeal of section 16 of the

⁵⁴BC, 7 and 16 Jan. 1919.

⁵⁵GOB Confidential Proceedings 1919, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁶BC, 6, 11, 16-17 Jan. and 4 Feb. 1919.

1888 Municipal Act which barred them from serving as Councillors. This right was demanded on the basis that the vital life-giving, nurturing, and 'civilizing' responsibilities of Indian society were 'largely in the hands of women'.⁵⁷ The vote, moreover, had 'nothing to do with religious and social prescriptions'. It was simply a 'political right' which did not affect 'the laws of Manu or the Koran'.⁵⁸

The *Chronicle* both led and was an integral part of the growing social awareness of the bilingual urban intelligentsia. This was now marked by the proliferation of voluntary associations and the growth of public interest pressure groups such as the Bombay Tenants Association and the Municipal Reform Association. Increasingly, the intelligentsia was becoming drawn to various forms of social work on behalf of the urban poor; significantly, a substantial proportion of these activities were oriented towards labour issues. This was the era that witnessed the birth of organisations such as the Society for the Amelioration of the Working Classes in the Presidency, the Workers' Welfare League, and the Proletariat Welfare Association.⁵⁹

Perhaps the most active and influential among the new associations was the Social Service League, founded in 1911. Its objectives were to promote educational and

⁵⁷Letter from the Indian Women's Education Association to the *Bombay Chronicle*, 25 Feb. 1919. This era was also marked by the growth of independent women's organizations based in Bombay and Poona. New 'feminist' journals such as *Stree Bodh* were raising the issue of women's inferior status in Indian society and supporting their arguments by referring to the achievements of the Suffragette Movement in England. Vir Bharat Talwar, *Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi, 1910-20*, in K. Sangari & S. Vaid (eds.), *Recasting Women* (Delhi 1989), pp. 206, 224.

⁵⁸"Franchise for Indian Women." Letter from Lady A. Ali Baig, *YI*, 15 Jan. 1919. Under Gandhi's control, *Young India* was one of the few nationalist papers not to unequivocally support the campaign by women for the franchise, even though this was amongst the demands put forward by the Congress-Muslim League Constitutional Reforms Scheme. It stated, in an editorial, that 'Our women will have best striven after and won their vote by rising equal to the traditions of the past in helping their men against a common foe. And how can they do this best? Surely not by an agitation of "votes for women", not by forming alliances with the women of other nations, but by working in complete accord with their men and assisting them in every possible manner..' *YI*, 24 Nov. 1920. An important dimension of the Mahatma's anti-modernism, of course, was his subordination of rights to duties. Parel, *Hind Swaraj*., pp. 81-82.

⁵⁹GOB Home Dept. (Special) File no. 355 (74) 1920; DCI Reports, June-July 1920.

welfare activities in the interests of industrial workers as well as acting as a forum for 'the discussion of social theories and social problems'. During the latter years of the War, the League began working on an innovatory scheme for 'Workmen's Educational Institutes' which it hoped would be supported by the Bombay government, large employers of labour, and the general public.⁶⁰

A report on the project in July 1918 stated that as a result of changes in the relationship between labour and capital in the West, the 'labour question' had now assumed a new public importance in the city. The Railway strike during the latter part of 1917 appeared to confirm this view: while primarily motivated by the deteriorating economic climate, some new ideas 'such as equality with the European employees in the Workshops' now emerged amongst strikers' demands.⁶¹

The League asserted that while discourse on labour had hitherto been dominated by public health concerns, the key issues for public consideration were now 'a minimum living wage and the number of working hours'. The 72-hour week authorized by the Factory Act ensured 'almost universal illiteracy', keeping workers away from education and giving them little opportunity for leisure and recreation. The League also joined the chorus of voices now urging "the State" to give a strong lead on the issue of working-class housing provision. In January 1917, a paper on 'State Aid for Housing' was read out at a meeting of the Bombay Cooperative Housing Association. The speaker asserted that

..there is now growing agreement on the point that unless Government afforded the necessary aid and facilities, any increase in the supply of houses for people of small means would be impossible, and that a satisfactory solution to the housing problem would be increasingly difficult. State aid for encouraging the supply of peoples' homes in European countries has now become an established fact.

⁶⁰The first of these was opened in Parel in February 1922; this was followed by the setting up of a Textile Technical School which provided workers with elementary instruction in Marathi in the theory and practice of spinning and weaving. *RCLI*, vol.1 part 1 (Evidence), pp. 40-41.

⁶¹*GOI Home Pol.A Proceedings* Nov. 1917, 628-638.

Apart from direct provision, there were various enabling fiscal policies that the State could adopt. Financial aid could be provided in the form of long-term loans at low rates of interest to municipalities, cooperative societies, and employers; progressive land policies could be initiated involving government or municipal acquisition of building land which would be sold or let on favourable terms so as to encourage the construction of sanitary dwellings; and tax incentives, particularly the removing of workers' dwellings from the tax structure, would greatly assist in reducing working-class rents.⁶²

The Social Service League also organised fortnightly meetings in the city on social issues which rapidly became a recognised forum for the dissemination of new ideas. These deliberations were subsequently published in its journal, the English language *Social Service Quarterly*. A primary focus of interest was, once again, the performance of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. There were frequent international comparisons outlining 'the variety of social welfare work' which modern European Municipalities were undertaking. Following Geddes, the activities of German Municipalities, in particular, tended to be highlighted.

The major German cities provided their citizens with an impressive range of social amenities, including a healthy supply of milk, cheap housing, public transport, and lighting, as well as reading rooms and municipal employment bureaux. These were funded, not only out of local taxes, but from generous annual grants made available by central government. This was contrasted with the extreme parsimony of the colonial state's financial assistance to Indian Municipalities.

Indeed, the *Social Service Quarterly* believed it had pinpointed the essential cause of the regressive outlook of the Bombay Municipality when it quoted an English observer of German local government as stating that '..The mental horizon of the average English municipal politician, *and therefore* of the average Indian municipal politician, is still limited to drains, roads, and building operations, whereas nothing human is alien to

⁶²S. S Talmaki, *State Aid for Housing*. Paper presented at a meeting of the Bombay Cooperative Housing Association, January 1917. *BC*, 10 Jan. 1917.

the German conception of town government.' Like the *Chronicle*, the Social Service League looked to the post-war era for a 'prodigious development in local self-government' so as to 'accelerate the widespread growth in India of the civic idea'. This was now, it emphasized, a major responsibility of government and would help promote amongst Indians, 'a keener sense of social equity'.⁶³

Such invitations to the colonial state to reform *governmental* institutions and expand their welfare activities was a new departure for social reformers; previously, much of their focus had, with colonial encouragement and approval, been one-sidedly concerned with 'self-improvement' and with securing the reform of indigenous institutions seen as having outlived their usefulness.⁶⁴

Increasing awareness of the close and interdependant patterns of city living were also contributing to the new civic perspectives. Addressing students, the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*, K. Natarajan, argued that

*..Civic progress..provides the much needed corrective to our conception of society as made up of hereditary castes. Civics, or the art and science of citizenship is, as the name implies, a special necessity of city life..The germ of the civic spirit is neighbourliness..(and it is a) curious fact that there is no word in our vernaculars conveying the precise idea of what is connoted by "neighbourliness." There is plenty of the thing itself but that is mostly in places where neighbours are generally also people of the same caste. That a person who lives next to us, merely because he lives next to us, and not because he belongs to the same caste, stands in some social relation to us involving obligations on our part as well as his, that is what is implied in neighbourliness.*⁶⁵

In turn, the institution of caste now appeared to be philosophically beyond the pale when confronted by the modernist perspectives of democracy. There was an 'inherent contradiction', stated the veteran social reformer Sir Narayan Chandavarkar in an article

⁶³The *Social Service Quarterly*, May 1918; *BC*, 15 May 1918.

⁶⁴McDonald, *English Education..*, pp. 466-69.

⁶⁵*BC*, 17 June 1921.

on 'Caste and Reform', between the democratic idea which regarded human beings 'as of equal worth', entitled to all the opportunities for their full development, and the caste-based philosophy of life which signified '..isolation, submission to outward force or power more than to the voice of the inner conscience, perception of fictitious differences between man and man due to heredity and birth, a passive acquiescence in evil or wrong-doing, and a general indifference to secular well-being almost bordering on fatalism.'⁶⁶

Similarly, M.K Jayakar, in an address to the Bombay Provincial Social Conference, asserted that 'the worst evil of caste is that it isolates and insulates'. However, authoritarian colonial rule provided no institutions or arenas that could serve as training grounds for democratic citizenship. Their absence meant the consolidation of caste identities and the perpetuation of a social system that was 'no longer suitable to our present needs'.⁶⁷

Both the propagation of civic ideas and the development of labour-oriented voluntary associations indicated a growth in the public sphere of urban civil society. In the discourse of critical modernism, labour rights and civic rights were inter-related and constituted the fundamental building blocks of sustainable urban renewal. The new prominence of labour issues also meant, moreover, an increase in public debates concerning the social class most deprived of rights. In turn, this increased the pressure on the colonial state since these discourses now formulated an unprecedented range of propositions and demands. Essentially, they called for the expansion, but also the recasting, of the framework of rights that lay at the heart of the colonial urban order. For the first time, the issue of social rights was being placed before the colonial state; moreover, it also had implications for the existing balance of political and civil rights.

⁶⁶N. Chandavarkar, *Caste and Reform*; BC 3 June 1919. Significantly, this civic discourse was shared although Natarajan, Jayakar, and Chandavarkar held different political views.

⁶⁷M. K Jayakar, Presidential Address to the Bombay Social Conference, May 1917. Jayakar Papers.

The achievement of social rights in the city (housing, water-supply, living wages) was now premised on the expansion of political rights through the democratization of the Municipality on the one hand, but also on the curtailment of civil property rights on the other. An enterprising municipality with progressive trading schemes would protect the public from the glaring inequalities of the market, while planned urban renewal would place limitations on the freedom of private owners and users of land; at the same time, the growth of trade unions would check the absolute rights of industrial capital vis-a-vis labour. Overall, this would, for the first time, add up to a substantial challenge to the systematic class bias in the existing framework of colonial citizenship rights.

Thus, by 1919, Bombay had emerged as the centrepiece of public pressure on both the local and central colonial states on the issue of rights. The wartime spiralling of both material deprivation and state repression increasingly radicalised a bilingual intelligentsia ideally placed to make sense of, and interpret these oppressions in the light of modern discourses of public rights. On the streets, in quick succession, the general textile strike and the Rowlatt satyagraha posed the problems of social, civil, and political rights with unprecedented acuity. If the colonial state often seemed to be out of its depth during this period, it was largely because, unlike the historical experience of western Europe, the clamour for these different rights did not occur gradually over the course of three centuries,⁶⁸ but was arriving on its doorsteps virtually simultaneously.

Now, an expanded public sphere of press, political, and voluntary groups, was questioning the hitherto untroubled hegemony of the market sphere of urban civil society, guaranteed by the limited colonial framework of legal rights. In so doing, it was posing a qualitatively novel challenge to the local colonial state: to intervene against the private interests which effectively constituted the social basis of its own hegemony.

⁶⁸One of Marshall's main contentions. T. H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London 1992), p. 17.

3. The spectre of civic democracy: colonial ambivalence, municipal reform, and local politics.

Meanwhile, the transformative global impact of the First World War was creating another source of pressure on colonial officialdom. The discursive redefining of political values, marked by the breakthrough of a whole new vocabulary of democratic aspirations, was also occurring much closer to home than Bombay. "Home Rule" pressure from India now fed into a wider world of complementary forces,⁶⁹ goading the India Office into action.

The Reforms were not preceded by any widespread consultation process in India itself and were essentially a pre-emptive move to conciliate moderate Indian opinion, spurred by the alternative Congress-Muslim League constitutional reform scheme. The achievement of 'responsible' government within the Empire based on 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions' became the new stated official colonial policy. The press noted however that the Reforms Bill did not embody a Declaration of Rights which effectively meant that the 'fundamentals of citizenship' would continue to be absent 'in the status of Indians'.⁷⁰

Constitutional reforms, which came into effect in 1921, established the innovative framework of 'dyarchy' whereby certain previously designated responsibilities of provincial governments (local self-government, agriculture, education, public health, public works) were now transferred to ministers accountable to elected provincial legislative assemblies. India Office discourse emphasized the 'nation-building' potentialities of the transferred departments, their scope for the exercise of 'genuine responsibility' and their suitability for the introduction of social and economic reforms.⁷¹

⁶⁹Besides its currency in Irish and Indian nationalisms, the slogan of 'Home Rule' was also appropriated by the new London Labour Party, founded in 1915. The LLP's manifesto for the first post-war London County Council elections called for "Home Rule for London." James Gillespie, *Municipalism, Monopoly, and Management: The Demise of 'Socialism in One County' 1918-1933*, in Andrew Saint (ed.), *Politics and the People of London. The London County Council, 1889-1965* (London 1989), p.104.

⁷⁰FR (1) Dec. 1919; BC, 30 Dec. 1918.

⁷¹Lobo, *The Working of Dyarchy..*, p. 61; Chari, *History of Bombay..*, p. iv.

Two Government of India war-time Resolutions on local self-government conceded a general growth in civic aspirations, and an increasing urban demand for administrative decentralization as a means of achieving greater municipal efficiency, which they linked to a 'similar tendency' in England. The GOI acknowledged that the time had come for an expansion in the numbers of elected representatives and an extension of the franchise. However, it refused to concede the principle of wholly elective local bodies while announcing its intention to maintain the institution of a non-elected, government-appointed Municipal Commissioner for large cities--even though local self-government was meant to be a "transferred" subject.⁷²

This was entirely in line with the political contradictions of the Reforms scheme which provided for a limited extension of voting rights *together with* the consolidation of sectional interest representation.⁷³ Moreover, the colonial state did not offer any new ideas for the raising of municipal revenue and rejected the principle of regular grants-in-aid from central government. It re-emphasised that 'services such as water-supply and electric (sic) lighting..should, as far as possible, pay for themselves.' When limits to local (indirect) taxation were reached, revenue could be supplemented by 'the development of municipal property'.⁷⁴

But not only was there to be no new formula for central government grant contributions to local bodies; the wartime financial crisis resulted in just the opposite process: a novel incursion by the centre into local sources of finance. Although graduated income tax was introduced in 1916, the new contributions⁷⁵ went straight into the coffers of the central exchequer. By removing this new source of enhanced revenue from the local arena, the central colonial state forestalled its potential use as a

⁷²GOB *Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1915, pp. 835-37.

⁷³S. Bhattacharya, *The Colonial State, Capital and Labour: Bombay 1919-1931*, in S. Bhattacharya and R. Thapar (eds.), *Situating Indian History* (Delhi 1986), p. 174.

⁷⁴GOB *Local..*, p. 142.

⁷⁵Bombay city paid 72 percent of the entire income tax of the Presidency in 1917. This fell largely on the dominant class factions, hitherto outside the colonial revenue structure. Gordon, pp. 17, 19, 21-22.

progressive, redistributive source of new funds for a post-war expansion in municipal services, thus striking a blow at the heart of local “nation-building”.

The Bombay government was bitterly opposed to the loss of the income tax from provincial revenues, a position confirmed by the Meston Committee in 1920.⁷⁶ It argued on the basis of its new “popular” mandate and even went so far as to initially refuse, in 1923, to cooperate with a proposed GOI inquiry into Indian taxation on the grounds that the inquiry’s terms of reference did not include ‘a critical examination of the recent (Meston) Settlement by which the various sources of revenue have been divided between the Central and Provincial Legislatures’.⁷⁷ Ironically, the GOI also attempted to justify the necessity for such an inquiry through a discourse of “public needs”: all provincial governments, it asserted, now had to face ‘increasing and legitimate demands for expenditure on Services under popularly elected Ministers’. Accordingly, it was important to explore all possibilities ‘to provide local Governments and Municipalities with better opportunities for expanding their revenues’.⁷⁸

This dispute over the jurisdictional boundaries of revenue allocation represented a long simmering outburst of inter-colonial rivalry:⁷⁹ but it should not conceal the fact the Bombay government and the GOI shared similar dispositions towards both public expenditure and to the full democratization of municipal government. It was a sure sign of the times, however, that both sides felt compelled to use idioms of popular accountability to justify their respective positions.

Both the strength of local public opinion and the Reforms now finally made changes in the Constitution of the Bombay Municipal Corporation inevitable. Workers too were now beginning to intervene in the debate over municipal reform. A meeting of

⁷⁶ibid., p . 26

⁷⁷Secretary, Finance Department GOB, to Secretary, Finance Department GOI, 6 Sept. 1923. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1923.

⁷⁸Secretary, Finance Department GOI, to Secretary, Finance Department GOB, 16 July 1923. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1923.

⁷⁹The strained relations between the GOB and the GOI during this period is also evident in the Bombay government’s protest to Delhi over the increase in ticket fares levied by the BB & CI and GIP Railway Companies in 1922. The GOB’s representations were disregarded. *Sanj Vartaman*, 13 Jan. 1923; *BNNR* no. 3, 1923.

mill hands in lower Parel in July 1922 urged the GOB to extend the franchise to those paying a monthly rent of five rupees; they also demanded that the Municipality urgently took steps to remedy the 'filthy condition' of both chawls and streets in the lower Parel mill area.⁸⁰ Some local nationalists, such as L. R. Tairsee, chairman of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, were now advocating universal adult franchise, as were the *Bombay Chronicle* and the labour-oriented *Hindusthan*.⁸¹

Women activists scored a notable victory when in September 1920, a majority 17-12 vote of the Standing Committee secured the removal of the bar against women serving as Councillors. The proposers argued that '...in certain aspects of local self-government they could well draw on the experience of women with advantage.'⁸² However, in spite of their protests and public meetings, women continued to be denied the franchise for elections to the new reformed Legislative Councils.⁸³ In other respects, moreover, the process of securing municipal reform proved to be painfully slow. Disregarding the press's warning that his predecessor had 'insidiously undermined the fabric of local self-government',⁸⁴ Governor Lloyd set up in 1920 yet another unaccountable public body, the Development Department.

Headed by a former Agent of the GIP Railway Company, Lawless Hepper,⁸⁵ it was to act both as 'a department of Government and an executive authority',⁸⁶ thus carrying the process of rule by quango to novel heights.⁸⁷ The new Department was

⁸⁰BC, 20 July 1922.

⁸¹BC, 17 Feb. 1922; *Hindusthan*, 15 July 1922; *BNNR* no. 29, 1922.

⁸²BC, 28 Sept. 1920.

⁸³BC, 14 July 1919. Women held a large number of protest meetings in the city in 1919-20.

⁸⁴Annual Report on Newspapers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1918. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1919, p.195.

⁸⁵Hepper's salary was Rs. 6000 per month. Virtually unanimously, the press criticized the fact that in the supposedly new era of 'Indianization', Britishers continued to enjoy a monopoly of all superior posts. The *Chronicle* observed that the basic flaw at the heart of the Reforms was its consolidation 'in high positions' of '...officials who have power without responsibility.' BC, 21 May 1924.

⁸⁶GOB *Development Proceedings* 1920, pp. 65, 45.

⁸⁷The *Bombay Samachar* commented that 'during the regime of Sir George Lloyd many autocratic acts have been done, but the most autocratic and unjust of all of them is

given a directional function in relation to the Municipal Corporation, the Improvement Trust, and the Port Trust so as to ensure the co-ordination and subserviance of their schemes vis-a-vis its own. It became responsible for 'all questions regarding the acquisition of land in Bombay city' and for dealing with Municipal Corporation and Improvement Trust applications for loans to finance their own urban schemes.⁸⁸

The Development Department's programme of house building⁸⁹ was primarily funded out of a new one-rupee town duty levied on each bale of raw cotton entering the city from other parts of India. The Department appropriated the lion share of this revenue leaving only a small proportion at the disposal of the Municipal Corporation to be spent, the Bombay government stipulated, on public works.⁹⁰ Again, a potential source of municipal revenue was largely appropriated by the local colonial state which at the same time effectively secured the removal of housing, the 'very basis of civic progress',⁹¹ from the sphere of municipal government. Moreover, a potential threat to the interests of landlords who, prior to the war, were facing possibilities of enhanced land assessment, was now also removed.

Nationalists within the Corporation had urged the Municipal Commissioner to consider the levying of a tax on vacant lands based on their value as eligible building sites. When the Commissioner finally produced a report outlining his recommendations in 1921, there were loud cheers in the Corporation Hall when he declared that due to 'practical difficulties', the introduction of any new system of land assessment was 'inexpedient' although the idea was 'theoretically justifiable'. The report was approved by majority vote, thus confirming the freedom of landlords to sit on their vacant lands and sell them at considerable profit when prices rose.⁹²

the Bombay Development Department..' *Bombay Samachar*, 17 May 1923. *BNNR* no. 20, 1923.

⁸⁸*GOB Development Proceedings* 1920, pp. 45-46.

⁸⁹See chapter 1.

⁹⁰*GOB Development ..*, p. 44.

⁹¹R.P Masani, *The Social Function of Municipal Government* in Manshardt (ed.), *Bombay Looks Ahead..*, p.11.

⁹²*BC*, 15 Oct. 1921.

Having let landlords off this particular hook, the Bombay government now moved to break their last ditch resistance to municipal reform⁹³ and finally announced, in January 1922, the introduction of legislation to amend the Municipal Act of 1888: The new Bill was aimed at 'broadening and simplifying the franchise in order to enable a larger number of citizens to take a direct interest in the administration of civic affairs'. Its main provisions were a new ten-rupee franchise based on monthly rent, the abolition of all other restricted franchises, and an increase in the number of Councillors to one hundred, four-fifths of whom were to be elected and the remainder nominated. There was to be no change in the method of choosing or in the status of the Municipal Commissioner.⁹⁴ The Bill thus maintained ultimate colonial control and had already, long before its enactment, been condemned by the press 'in these days of advancement, reform, progress and self-determination' as being of 'a highly retrograde character'.⁹⁵

The "renewed" Municipal Corporation, moreover, would not be up and running until early 1923--more than two years after the inauguration of the "reformed" Bombay Legislative Council, and three years after the setting up of the Development Department--an indication of its relatively low priority in the eyes of the colonial authorities.⁹⁶ The extension of the franchise meant a fivefold increase in the number of voters, but in a city of one and a quarter million this still only amounted to 75,000 people or 7 per cent of the urban population;⁹⁷ this amounted to one-eighth of the numbers now entitled to vote in Glasgow as a result of the Representation of the People

⁹³They dominated the Corporation's Franchise Sub-Committee and recommended a Rs. 20 franchise and an electoral college system comprising both rent and rate payers. They were once again championed by the ubiquitous Ibrahim Rahimtoola. The Bombay government's lack of urgency in breaking the resistance of the Corporation was indeed attributed to 'the pressure of capitalistic interests..in the counsels of Government'. *BC*, 17 Jan. 1922.

⁹⁴GOB Press Note, 11 Jan. 1922; *GOB Local Self-Government Proceedings* 1922, p. 17.

⁹⁵*Kaiser-i-Hind*, 21 Sept. 1919; *BNNR* no. 38, 1919.

⁹⁶This was also indicated by the Bombay government's decision, in 1922, to deprive the Municipal Corporation of its representation on the Port Trust and allocate its place to the Indian Merchants' Chamber. *BC*, 30 Aug. 1922.

⁹⁷*BC*, 2 Feb. 1923.

Act of 1918.⁹⁸ In effect, it represented the late enfranchisement of the professional intelligentsia and the commercial middle class; still excluded from political citizenship were industrial and other manual workers as well as the majority of the lower middle class--subordinate clerks, small traders, superior artisans.

The new franchise enabled the emergence, for the first time, of party politics. The January 1923 election largely crystallized into a contest between the Nationalist Municipal Party led by Vithalbhai Patel and the Progressive Party led by Homi Mody. While millowners and landlords were prominent amongst the PP leadership, the NMP's leading members were predominantly Gujarati middle merchants: the party was indeed ideologically close to the Gandhian Congress. As the latter had excluded municipalities from the sphere of non-cooperation,⁹⁹ the NMP was able to set forth a relatively autonomous political manifesto. It advocated the municipalisation of public services, and, consistent with "nationalist"¹⁰⁰ commitments, pledged itself to promoting the rights of tenants as against landlords, as well as to campaign for a further lowering of the rental franchise and for a fully elected Municipality with the right to select the Commissioner.¹⁰¹

The ^{NMP} gained the support of the *Bombay Chronicle*, largely on the basis of its manifesto promise to work towards the municipalisation of public services. This, the paper emphasized, was a vital issue in the city in view of 'the growing burdens' which the private utilities 'seek to throw on the shoulders of the public'. The old Corporation, 'under the inspiration of successive Municipal Commissioners', had been 'very

⁹⁸BC, 30 Jan.1923.

⁹⁹The Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee in 1922 had come out against extending Non-Cooperation to municipal and local bodies. These, it pointed out, entered 'more deeply into the daily life of the people' than Legislative Councils. It therefore advocated the desirability '..for Non-Cooperators to seek election to Municipal and District or Local Boards with a view to facilitate the working of the constructive programme.' *Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee appointed by the All India Congress Committee, 1922*, pp.133-34.

¹⁰⁰Nationalists, though, were hardly a united or coherent force during this election. It was reported that in several sections, notably Girgaum and Mahim, there was 'complete disunity amongst "nationalists", with each candidate working for himself..' BC, 30 Jan. 1923.

¹⁰¹BC, 18 Jan. 1923.

indulgent..towards these bodies at the expense of the public'. It was now up to the newly enfranchised intelligentsia to 'turn the scales' against the overwhelming domination of private interests.¹⁰²

The paper professed satisfaction at the election result. The Municipal Nationalists emerged as the largest party, capturing 35 seats; with the support of sympathizers, the combined nationalist strength in the new Corporation increased from 15 to 47. The new class of '23 also included, for the first time in India, 4 women--Sarojini Naidu, Avantikabai Gokhale (Nationalist), Perin Captain (Progressive), Anne Hodgkinson (Independent).¹⁰³

The Municipal Nationalists were close, but not close enough, to capturing the Municipality. In practice, the Progressives, with the support of government nominees, narrowly held the upper hand. Indeed Patel lost the subsequent mayoral election to Mody by a mere three votes (50-47).¹⁰⁴ The *Chronicle* now urged the Nationalists to adopt 'a more constructive programme' and spell out practical policies. In the meantime, it had no hesitation in offering its own blueprint:

*..the programme of civic development as tackled by the Government of Bombay in their Development Directorate is a direct invasion of the sphere of municipal activity which it is not even now too late to challenge. For with the main issue of civic housing are involved the side issues of transport development and improvements in such matters as water supply, sanitary appliances, open spaces, public parks and playgrounds, street alignment and lighting...civic education..*¹⁰⁵

Most importantly, a 'cheaper, healthier and more effective solution' to the problem of popular housing than that offered by either private enterprise or the local colonial state needed to be found. As Professor Jevons pointed out, the DD chawls' intolerable living conditions militated against all 'dispositions of good citizenship'.¹⁰⁶ The ^{NmP} *Chronicle*,

¹⁰²ibid.

¹⁰³BC, 2 Feb. 1923.

¹⁰⁴Gordon, p.139.

¹⁰⁵BC, 2 Feb.1923.

¹⁰⁶BC, 10 May 1923.

which was opposed to ‘..the forces of capitalism cum landlordism which dominated the old Corporation’ should now attempt to secure decent accomodation ‘either by promoting co-operative enterprise...or by the extension of municipal trading’ to the building of a stock of social housing.¹⁰⁷

The ^{NMP} was however already under attack from some of the city’s lower caste organisations. The party was accused of simply ‘making a show of democracy’, while failing to select a single lower caste person or worker as candidate; significantly, it had opted for a large number of Brahmins as well as ‘out and out capitalists’. It was essentially representative of the Gujarati ‘middle and trading classes’ which had been emancipated by the new franchise, and provided a telling ‘example of the kind of “Swaraj” in store for the Indian masses’. Indeed, municipal reform had not achieved an increase in the representation of the ‘Backward and Working classes’ in the Corporation which remained at just three. More genuine democratic representation would be secured by lowering the franchise to three rupees, introducing ballot voting, placing limits on candidates’ election spending, extending the opening of polling offices till 10 p.m, and reserving seats for the Backward and Working classes.¹⁰⁸

Between 1923 and 1926, the Municipal Nationalists enjoyed some successes in the Corporation and introduced a few new ideas in the realm of local self-government. The right to make speeches in the vernacular, the opening of the Corporation Hall to the public, and the campaign against the increase in tram fares--greatly assisted by popular mobilization outside the Corporation, all seemed promising achievements within the first year of the life of the reformed Municipality.¹⁰⁹

In July 1924, the ^{NMP}’s Jamnadas Mehta moved a Resolution for the establishment of Ward-based municipal administration, arguing that greater decentralization, on the model of London, would lead to a better delivery of services and a quicker response to the numerous citizen complaints. The central body, which

¹⁰⁷BC, 2 Feb. 1923.

¹⁰⁸R.Yeshwant, *Bombay Municipality and Backward Classes*. Letter to the *Bombay Chronicle*, 2 April 1923.

¹⁰⁹BC, 20 Feb. and 25 April 1923; 27 Feb. 1924.

had grown increasingly bureaucratic through the passage of time, would thus be left free to focus on major city-wide issues. The Resolution, which was defeated by majority vote, represented an astute attempt to by-pass the Corporation's cumbersome decision-making body, the Standing Committee, on which nationalists comprised a small minority.¹¹⁰

NMP

Driven by its deputy-leader, K.F Nariman, the *NMP* also pressed for a further lowering of the rental franchise, a fully elected Municipality, and for the right of the Corporation to elect the Municipal Commissioner. Introducing a Resolution in July 1925, Nariman argued that the maintenance of a government-appointed Commissioner who was virtually independent of the Corporation, was entirely opposed to the spirit of the Reforms and continued to make local self-government in the city 'a sham'.¹¹¹ The *NMP* also opposed all attempts to foister communal representation on to the municipal Constitution on the model of the Bombay Legislative Council. Nariman successfully argued that the Corporation 'represented a united and cosmopolitan city' and that any system of sectional representation was incompatible with the extension of civic democracy.¹¹²

NMP

It was perhaps inevitable that the *NMP*'s minority position in the Corporation should ensure the defeat of most of its Resolutions. It is equally true, however, that the party's narrow class base rendered it an increasingly less than reliable champion of democratic rights. The Resolution on the status of the Municipal Commissioner, for instance, was lost by the surprisingly large margin of 64-31. In effect, fifteen nationalists led by Kaka Baptista had joined forces with the Progressives to vote against the proposition. Baptista attempted to justify his crossing of the floor on the rather tenuous grounds that what he in fact wanted was 'a complete overhauling of the

¹¹⁰*BC*, 23 July 1924.

¹¹¹*BC*, 22 July 1925.

¹¹²*BC*, 4 Sept. 1924.

Municipal Act' so as to 'guarantee the independence of the Commissioner from political parties'.¹¹³

Such opportunism was symptomatic of sharpening divisions within the ^{NMP} ~~BC~~ which reflected its gradual immersion into the increasingly factionalized politics of the Bombay City Congress Committee in general, and the Bombay Swaraj Party in particular. The ^{NMP} ~~BC~~ was theoretically committed to promoting the rights of tenants as against landlords, and therefore to an extension of the war-time Rent Act, due to expire at the end of 1925. It could only do so, however, with the support of the Bombay Swaraj Party which operated in the Legislative Council where any Bill for such an extension would have to be introduced. Many of the leading members of the ^{NMP} ~~BC~~, including Patel, Nariman, Baptista, and Velkar, were also members of the BSP.

The BSP, however, refused to endorse Nariman's Bill to extend the Rent Act for a further 3 years. Its leader in the Bombay Legislative Council, M.K Jayakar, issued a statement to the effect that the BSP '..refuses to look upon the class of landlords as the enemy of national progress as much as it considers the class of tenants as the ardent supporters of national aspirations'.¹¹⁴ Nariman's Rent Act Amendment Bill was heavily defeated. As a result, landlords immediately hiked up their rents, imposing, according to the Tenants' Association, rises on their tenants of between 129 and 833 percent. M. K Irani, who ran the Empire cinema restaurant, saw rent for these premises shoot up from Rs.315 to Rs.1093, an increase of 347 percent; Tulsidas Munshiram, a small shopkeeper near Jakaria Masjid, faced an enhancement from Rs.11 to Rs.25, a rise of 227 percent.¹¹⁵ In response, over seventy protest meetings against the liberalization of rents were held in the city during the summer months of 1925, while the press warned of serious and continuous social unrest.¹¹⁶

¹¹³BC, 22 July 1925. Baptista had recently been nominated by the Bombay government on to the Development Department's Advisory Committee for Bombay city.

¹¹⁴Reported in BC, 21 Aug. 1924.

¹¹⁵Reported in BC, 29 Jan. 1925.

¹¹⁶BC, 17 Aug. 1925.

This debacle also demonstrated the powerful impact of the long dominance of civil market rights on the urban social structure. The newly enfranchised intelligentsia now discovered its own contradictory class locations: socially aware of the plight of the urban poor and willing to act to improve the condition of labour, but economically aspiring and therefore liable to having its reforming drives blunted by a powerful urban propertied class whose capitalist orientations it could not fully contest.

The ^{NMP} ~~1923~~'s anti-landlord wing, led by Jamnadas Mehta and Balubhai Desai, played a prominent part in the protest campaign. Inevitably, however, the party emerged weakened in the Corporation, a prelude to its formal split in 1926. Policy goals such as the 'municipalisation of services' were abandoned, or left to individual members to pursue. When the Corporation's Tramway Committee recommended the acceptance of the levying of a twelve and a half percent increase in electricity charges on consumers by the BEST Company in return for the maintenance of tram fares at their existing rates, most of the ^{NMP} ~~1923~~ Councillors voted for the proposition.¹¹⁷

The ^{NMP} ~~1923~~'s failure to make any headway on the issue of municipalisation also reflected the continuing constraints on the raising of fresh local revenues. Just prior to the inauguration of the reformed Corporation, the *Chronicle* had warned that the 'current sources of revenue' were 'practically exhausted'. New sources, moreover, which '...rightly belong to the Municipality' had been 'appropriated by the Provincial Government without any protest from the City Fathers'. The new Corporation needed to ensure that the colonial state restored the substantial portion of locally raised revenues back to the city. Moreover, it was important for the Municipality to reform the existing taxation structure 'with a view to ensure that only those who are able to bear heavier burdens are called upon to do so and not the rich and poor alike'.¹¹⁸

Between 1914 and 1924, the total expenditure of the Municipal Corporation more than doubled as a result, not of any expansion in services, but of the increase in costs

¹¹⁷BC, 15 Sept. 1923.

¹¹⁸BC, 13 Jan. 1923.

brought about by the war.¹¹⁹ New levies such as the refundable town duty were introduced, bearing on basic articles such as foodgrains, flour, ghee, sugar, timber, and firewood. In effect, this amounted to a 'consumption tax' on citizens since wholesale merchants were reimbursed if the commodity left the city unconsumed.¹²⁰ In 1925-26, municipal revenue from the town duty alone equalled the combined revenue from the cotton duty and land taxes on mills and government-owned land.¹²¹ Thus, the regressive pre-war municipal taxation structure was not only maintained by the "reformed" Corporation, but substantially enhanced.

The demise of the Municipal Nationalists severed the already tenuous link between local nationalism and democratic urban renewal. R. P Masani, who for a very brief period in 1922-23 held the post of (acting) Municipal Commissioner, deeply regretted the widening gulf, in the post-1926 period, between the 'all-absorbing' nationalist struggle and the 'quiet task' of civic reconstruction.¹²² This ensured that the local, empirical terrain of citizenship was increasingly lost sight of. Henceforth, rival Congress factions, embroiled in all-India struggles and driven by class compromises, would not perceive the city as a promising theatre for an experiment in democratic self-government, capable of ushering in a new era of social and material advance. Rather, Bombay became a glittering political prize to be won within the rules of authoritarian colonial governance, an influential arena for the exercise of a new hegemony.¹²³

¹¹⁹Gordon, p. 130.

¹²⁰ibid., p. 142.

¹²¹The town duty yielded Rs.1,700,000, the cotton duty Rs.1,600,000, while land taxes on mills and government-owned property brought in Rs. 712,626 and 320,820 respectively. Gordon, p. 141.

¹²²Masani, *Evolution of Local Self-Government...*, p. 403.

¹²³Congress never availed itself of the opportunity of making use of Masani's civic talents, and he gradually drifted out of local politics. Rather more of a mainstream nationalist, the other contemporary champion of local issues, K. F Nariman, suffered an even greater demise. When he wrote a pamphlet criticizing Gandhi's 'semi-religious ideology' which had 'no relevance to practical politics', Sardar Patel and K.M Munshi hatched a plot, in the mid-1930s, to oust him as Congress leader in the city, a process that eventually culminated in his expulsion from the party. H. S Dalal, *Veer Nariman-A Profile* (Bombay n. d), pp. 20-22, 24-25, 30.

By the mid 1920s it was clear that the early post-war hopes for a radical restructuring of municipal government in Bombay city had not materialized. The Bombay government strongly resisted demands for democratic reform, and the maintenance of its power to appoint the Municipal Commissioner coupled with a limited extension of the franchise, signified the preservation of colonial 'autocracy invested with parliamentary forms'.¹²⁴

In spite of a rich surge in contestations, aspirations, and ideas, the political rights of urban citizenship remained severely constrained. Indeed, the authoritarian nature of the rule by quango system in force in Bombay city, and the 'unhealthy rivalry'¹²⁵ which it promoted, had in fact been reinforced. This was underlined by the official Vivesvarya Committee, set up to look into 'Municipal Retrenchment and Reform', which published its report in May 1925.

The Report stated that the expansion of municipal enterprise was being held back by the vesting of all executive power in the hands of the Municipal Commissioner 'who has been more a master than a servant of the Corporation'. This had deprived Councillors of the 'effective initiative which the possession of power gives', while the largely excluded and unrepresented public had remained apathetic. Indeed, the 'misfortune of Bombay' was that it was 'the victim of experiments in "development"' by different bodies whose activities were not 'harmonized by any co-ordinating authority'.

The Committee advocated the dissolving of the Development Department, the Improvement Trust, and the Port Trust as separate institutions and the taking over of their functions by the Bombay Municipality. The Corporation needed to be given the necessary financial assistance by government to expand its activities, and it was also now necessary to devise procedures to ensure close public scrutiny over all municipal

¹²⁴Annual Report on Indian and Anglo-Vernacular Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1924; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1925, p. 116.

¹²⁵*BC*, 19 Jan. 1924.

schemes. Indeed, the slowness and general costliness of many projects were primarily due to the absence of proper structures of accountability.

This absence resulted in lax departmental procedures within the Corporation. The various departments needed to be regulated and controlled through systemized rules, manuals, and codes of procedure. Estimates for large and costly projects, for instance, required scrutiny and approval by an independent agency and not just by the Departments which devised them in the first place. Although the ^{NMP} had raised the issue, no attempt had been yet made to explore how the municipalisation of public utilities such as the tramways, electricity, and gas might benefit the majority of citizens. There were also no regular surveys of the city in terms of citizens' access to basic material resources; such surveys might serve as the mechanism for setting 'increasingly higher standards of efficiency in services'. These policies and procedures existed elsewhere, and Bombay 'could benefit enormously from lessons to be drawn from the experience and development of cities like London, Manchester, Glasgow, Berlin, and New York..'

The Report also dwelt on the 'crucial' social issues of housing and public transport. The slow progress of municipal house building could be improved by liberal tax concessions to private builders and co-operative societies. The high rates of house rentals in the city were, moreover, related to the problem of public transit. The city urgently required both an expansion of the tramway service and the electrification of the railways. The Municipality could play its part in tackling the problem of high prices by introducing subsidized housing for workers and by either taking over or granting public interest concessions to the BEST Company so as to secure improvements in the tramway service. Finally, no effective long-term improvement in public civic awareness was possible without a reversal of the Corporation's record of 'lamentable failure in elementary education'; this meant generous public expenditure on compulsory schooling for children and the introduction of 'civics' in the primary curriculum.¹²⁶

¹²⁶*Report of the Municipal Retrenchment and Reform Committee, 1925; BC, 11 May 1925.*

4. Expressive rights and the challenge of social citizenship: the press, strikes, and colonial legislation.

The ambivalent and ultimately reactionary response of the colonial state to the demand for municipal democratization was just one aspect of the simultaneous pressures it was now facing for an expansion of public rights. The war years had seen the drastic curtailing by censorship of the civil rights of free speech, the infringement of which potentially incurred the loss of personal freedom. The imprisonment of the Ali brothers had led the *Indian Social Reformer* to comment on the colonial state's contradictory stance: on the one hand, dismissing those agitating for an expansion of political rights as having no influence with the masses, yet at the same time depriving them of their civil rights.¹²⁷

With the deportation of Horniman and the executive action against the *Chronicle* in 1919, the press portrayed both the central and local colonial states as not merely failing to move with the democratic and egalitarian aspirations of the times, but as retrograde and veering back towards 'autocracy'. In the city, there were now unanimous demands from all shades of opinion not merely for a restoration of the civil rights abrogated by the Defense of India Act, but for the inauguration of a new era of press freedoms which initially required the repeal of the infamous Press Act.

Both the revolutionary change in public opinion and the impending introduction of the constitutional reforms now led the India Office to pressurize the Government of India to send out conciliatory signals over the ultimate fate of the Press Act.¹²⁸ The end of the war also brought the lifting of military censorship of telegrams and newspapers. When the general textile strike erupted in the city in January 1919, the Bombay government requested the colonial state's sanction to resume inland telegraph censorship with a view to ascertaining '..to what extent the movement is organised

¹²⁷The *Indian Social Reformer*, 23 May 1915; *BNNR* no. 21, 1915.

¹²⁸*GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1919, p. 2133.

from the outside'.¹²⁹ The Government of India turned the request down, but the continuing social unrest quickly led to a change of heart.

In September 1919, the colonial state proposed that, along with the provincial administrations of Bengal and Madras, the Bombay government should proceed to establish its own civilian telegraph censorship arrangements. This would confer 'the power to control press messages from abroad that might be considered undesirable for publication in India'; inland telegrams received and despatched from Bombay, Poona, and Sind, would also be covered. This was especially necessary, it pointed out, because although Reuters' could still be relied upon to exercise 'responsible' self-censorship, important newspapers like the *Bombay Chronicle*¹³⁰ and *Kesari* now received non-Reuter telegrams direct.¹³¹

The Bombay government readily acquiesced. However, when the colonial state circulated the suggested new press policy framework devised by the India Office, ie the 'possibility of adopting in future a policy of counter-propaganda in preference to an increasing use of the Press Act', the Lloyd Administration adopted an initially hawkish stance. It responded by asserting its conviction '..of the necessity of maintaining the powers conferred by the Act' while observing that these had been generally exercised with 'strict moderation and discrimination'.

The action taken against the *Bombay Chronicle* in May 1919, for instance, had 'effected a general improvement in the tone of the press'. It was important to remember, moreover, that unlike the generally factual and balanced press in England, the Indian press engaged in '..publishing irresponsible, distorted, or palpably false

¹²⁹GOB Confidential Proceedings 1919, pp. 19-23.

¹³⁰Even after Horniman's deportation, the *Chronicle* maintained its position as Bombay's leading civic and nationalist daily. In November 1923, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee wrote to the Consuls of the US, Italy, and Norway to bring to their notice the Congress resolution of the boycott of goods manufactured in the British Empire. The letter suggested the desirability of promoting goods manufactured in their countries in the Indian market by means of a continuous and well thought out advertising campaign, 'particularly through the *Bombay Chronicle* which is the most widely circulated as well as the most influential daily in India'. FR (2) Nov. 1923.

¹³¹GOI Home Political A Proceedings 1919, 74-107.

versions of current events..’ While more could certainly be done in the form of propaganda, this could ‘never in itself be an adequate remedy’, and it would be ‘a dereliction of duty’ to abandon or weaken the controls established by the Press Act.¹³²

The local colonial state was indirectly admitting that it was losing the battle over the shaping of the growing public sphere of civil society, and that the only method of curtailing ‘the preponderant influence of the Press on public opinion’ was to continue to circumscribe press freedoms by severe executive controls. The agitation against the Act, however, continued unabated in Bombay city: with the likelihood that it would always figure prominently in any resumption of civil disobedience, the Bombay government reluctantly came round, eight months later, to the GOI’s proposition of repeal, accepting the view that a new climate needed to be created for the successful working of the reforms.¹³³ It strongly urged, however, that ‘the hands of courts’ should be correspondingly strengthened so as to clearly fix ‘..responsibility on printers, publishers, and editors’ for the good conduct of the press.¹³⁴

The Press Act was indeed repealed in September 1922 (together with the Defense of India and Rowlatt Acts), but this did not mean the restoration of journalistic freedom. The offense of press “sedition” remained on the statute book under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, together with the colonial state’s monopoly over its interpretation. The power to confiscate seditious newspapers, pamphlets, and books--including the ‘auxiliary power’ to prevent the importation, and dissemination through the post, of such material--was simply transferred to the courts. While the security clauses were abolished, other provisions of the Act were now added to the Sea

¹³²Secretary, GOB Home Dept. to Sec. GOI Home, 4 Nov. 1919. *GOB Judicial Proceedings* 1919, pp. 2133-34.

¹³³In February 1920, the GOB cancelled all securities deposited by Bombay newspapers under the Press Act and returned them to the depositors. The *Chronicle* was the only paper excluded from this amnesty. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1920, p. 73.

¹³⁴Secretary, GOB Judicial Dept. to Sec. GOI Home Political Proceedings, 25 Aug. 1920. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1920, pp. 385-86. *GOI Home Political* 1921, no. 4, part 1, 1-33.

Customs Act and the Post Offices Act.¹³⁵ Indeed, for the remaining two and a half decades of British rule in India, the various derivatives of the Press Act would continue to serve as 'the basis for intervention in the circulation of printed matter'.¹³⁶

The *Chronicle* observed that unless the existing law of sedition was drastically modified, there could be no 'true liberty of the Press' in India.¹³⁷ The more moderate *Jam-e-Jamshed* called for the setting up of independent committees, which would include elected representatives of the people, to decide what constituted 'seditious literature'.¹³⁸ The city's nationalist press were not inclined to view repeal as a progressive measure, in view of their firm belief in the local colonial state's inherent predisposition to 'smell sedition in every assertion of right'.¹³⁹ They pointed out that it was only the Bombay government's recalcitrance that continued to keep Horniman out of India, even after the repeal of the Defense of India Act.¹⁴⁰

The Bombay government confidentially admitted that the dividing line between 'sedition' and 'severe criticism' was 'practically illusory'.¹⁴¹ In practice, however, its propensity to treat protest 'as a form of crime'¹⁴² provided more evidence of its limited conception of political citizenship. The continued absence of a concept of oppositional rights expresses the political traditionalism of a repressive local state confronted by a rapidly evolving urban civil society. In this context, freedom of the

¹³⁵GOI Home Political Proceedings 1922; *Indian Social Reformer*, 24 July 1921; BNNR, no. 30, 1922; GOB Confidential Proceedings 1923, p. 238.

¹³⁶Barrier, *Banned..*, p. 54.

¹³⁷BC, 19 and 22 Sept. 1921.

¹³⁸*Jam-e-Jamshed*, 22 July 1921; BNNR, no. 30, 1921.

¹³⁹*New Times*, 16 Oct. 1923; BNNR no. 42, 1923.

¹⁴⁰Indeed, Secretary of State Montagu himself stated in the House of Commons that 'so long as the Government of Bombay thinks it necessary to enforce the Order of Exclusion', he would support it. GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings, March 1920, 80. Three years later, the departing Lloyd cabled the India Office reaffirming his view '...that Horniman, if he were to return at present to Bombay, would immediately become a rallying point for agitation and that he should not, for that reason, be permitted to do so..' Lloyd to Secretary of State, 25 Sept. 1923. IO, Public and Judicial Dept. Files : L/P&J/12.

¹⁴¹Sec. GOB Judicial Dept. to Sec. GOI Home Pol. 25 Aug. 1920. GOB Confidential Proceedings 1920, pp. 385-86.

¹⁴²The *Indian Social Reformer*, 14 April 1923; BNNR no. 15, 1923.

press was feared precisely because it represented a fundamentally enabling civil right with crucial powers to define and assert new political and social claims. Moreover, the varied transmission routes from the written to the oral meant that bureaucratic control over printed forms at source remained the favoured means of preventing “subversive” messages from reaching the lower classes.

Indeed, the colonial authorities were increasingly articulating the new ‘danger’ emanating from urban social aspirations. In May 1920, Lloyd confessed to the Viceroy that his haste in wanting to get his industrial housing scheme off the ground was to preempt ‘..danger not only (from) among the ranks of labour but (from) among other classes whose humanitarian instincts have been aroused’.¹⁴³ Bombay, the Viceroy in turn reported to the Secretary of State in November, constituted ‘the chief danger-point’ of social unrest in India and was currently experiencing ‘a sort of epidemic strike fever’. While this was caused primarily by local economic factors--high prices, low wages, poor housing conditions, ‘certain newspapers..notably the *Chronicle*’, together with ‘political agitators’ were openly encouraging strikes and giving workers ideas ‘..by the frequent reports of labour trouble in England and Europe’.¹⁴⁴

Once again, the combination of journalistic and political campaigning, with its potent blend of textual and oral messages, was perceived as particularly threatening: The organisation of labour in the city, the CID warned, was proceeding along the most ‘unhealthy lines’ as a result of the influence of Western-educated ‘intellectuals’ within its ranks. It fingered, amongst others, the recently appointed assistant-editor of the *Chronicle*, Chaman Lal, whose labour activities were even more than usually dangerous as he was ‘the most active of the representatives in India of the (socialist) Workers’ Welfare League of London’.¹⁴⁵

In this new context, it was soon clear that the local colonial state’s traditional policy of social non-intervention in conflicts between industrial capital and labour, which

¹⁴³GOB Development Proceedings 1920, p. 73.

¹⁴⁴GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings, Nov. 1920, 281.

¹⁴⁵DCI Reports, July 1920 and May 1921.

allowed full rein to the dominance of capital, was going to be severely tested. It was initially compelled to intervene by the sheer street pressure of the January 1919 general textile strike when over one hundred thousand mill hands downed tools in pursuit of a thirty-five percent wage increase which included a month's bonus as well as strike pay. As we have seen, it quickly became obvious that the Bombay millowners had lost control and that there were 'no prospects of early settlement'. The strike was accompanied by riots and the looting of shops in the north of the city, and its southward spread to the Government Dockyard in the Fort aroused real fear in the government of a 'general dislocation and paralysis of life in the city'.¹⁴⁶

For the first time, a Bombay governor agreed to receive a delegation of mill hands at Bombay Castle. Acknowledging the harshness of the economic climate, Lloyd assured the delegates that he would use his 'best influence' with their employers to ensure that 'justice is done to you', urging in the meantime a prompt return to work and the restoration of social peace.¹⁴⁷

The Governor summoned the city's leading millowners and made it clear that the immediate grant of a twenty percent increase in the war allowance was imperative. Industrialists had little option but to agree, and they also committed themselves to increasing the January wage through a ^{twenty percent increase in war allowance as well as a} bonus of between Rs.10-20 per worker, thereby bringing the strike to an end.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, however, Lloyd did not raise the more fundamental issue of a permanent rise in basic pay: resolution of the conflict was secured not through pressure on millowners to devise a new framework for wage entitlements, but as the result of a one-off paternalistic intervention. The focus remained on the temporary expedients of both the 'war allowance' and 'bonus' payments which were still dependent on employers' "goodwill". He also encouraged the millowners to

¹⁴⁶*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1919, pp. 32-33. The heightened colonial fear, evident during this era, of losing political control over the city as a result of the sheer numbers that mill workers' mass action might involve, was first voiced by the Bombay Police Commissioner following the strikes that accompanied Tilak's trial and conviction in 1908. Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power..*, pp. 153-54.

¹⁴⁷*GOB Confidential..*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁸*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1919, pp. 21-25.

stand firm against conceding any strike pay so as not to confer legitimacy to strike action as a means of pressing industrial wage claims.¹⁴⁹

The continuing spiralling of the cost of living, however, ensured that strikes were now here to stay particularly as neither employers nor the local colonial state were at all keen to confront the issue of a basic living wage. The barrister Kaka Baptista, one of the leading labour organisers in the city during the early 1920s, asserted that it was indeed the insecurity associated with the 'temporary character' of allowances that constituted one of the root causes of the industrial unrest.¹⁵⁰ Another textile workers' strike in January 1920 saw an escalation in demands, this time for a reduction in working hours from twelve to nine, and for the regular payment of wages on the fifteenth of each month.¹⁵¹

Between 1921 and 1924, there were 406 industrial stoppages in Bombay city compared to just 48 in 1914-17;¹⁵² From 1920 onwards, the escalation of strikes in the city was accompanied by the growth of trade unions. Labour activists organised a series of meetings in working-class neighbourhoods to explain the aims of trade unionism; the presence at these gatherings of women workers relating 'pitiful stories of poverty' was noted by the press. Indeed, following a meeting in lower Parel, a Union of Women Workers was formed for the first time in India in January 1922.¹⁵³ Though small in membership and often leading a temporary existence, labour unions were rapidly springing up all over the city and beyond. Between 1918 and 1924, no less than fifteen unions of postal workers sprang into existence in the Presidency.¹⁵⁴ By 1922, the number of unions in Bombay had increased from a handful to forty-eight with an approximate membership of eighty thousand.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹*ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵⁰"Mill Wages." Letter from J. Baptista to *BC*, 27 Sept. 1921.

¹⁵¹*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1924, p. 23.

¹⁵²Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing in Bombay.*, p. 146.

¹⁵³*BC*, 28 Jan. 1922.

¹⁵⁴*BC*, 21 Oct. 1921; *RCLI*, vol. 1, p.106.

¹⁵⁵*ibid.*, p. 102.

Particularly militant during this period were tramway workers employed by the BEST Company. Between November 1919 and February 1920, workers employed at the Company's Dadar Workshops called twenty-five lightning strikes in support of a higher pay claim which eventually resulted in the award of a monthly wage increase of Rs. 6-4 annas.¹⁵⁶ The strikes also resulted in the formation of a Tramwaymen's Union in January 1921, set up to protect and improve members' standard of living, with a membership of one thousand five hundred or about 'eighty percent of employees'.¹⁵⁷

When the Company refused to recognise the union, unless its officials were 'restricted to tramway employees', the workers threatened a general strike.¹⁵⁸ After prolonged and fruitless negotiations, a strike was called in 1922. By this time, demands had escalated to include a radical restructuring of pay scales as well as 'the provision of shelters with kiosks, water-pipes, and water-closets for the convenience of employees' at all the main tram termini.¹⁵⁹ The strike ended when managers promised that 'the Company would pay wages equivalent to those paid by the GIP Railway for similar classes of work', though union recognition was still withheld.¹⁶⁰

This deteriorating social climate compelled Governor Lloyd, once again, to receive a deputation of the newly formed, Bombay-based All-India Trades Union Congress in October 1920. The delegates appealed to Lloyd to reverse the local colonial state's traditional support for capitalist interests and to recognise the legitimacy of strikes. They pointed out that in a city where the vast majority of workers were '..notoriously ill-paid, ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-educated', strike action should be recognised as 'a legitimate method of collective bargaining..a "particular method of doing business" and not a declaration of war or a trial of strength.'¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶GOB *Judicial Proceedings* Jan.-April 1920, p. 378.

¹⁵⁷*ibid.*

¹⁵⁸BC, 19 Feb. 1921 and 17 July 1922.

¹⁵⁹BC, 9 Aug. and 19 Sept. 1922.

¹⁶⁰RCLI, pp. 538-541.

¹⁶¹FR (1) Nov. 1920.

Lloyd rejected their attribution of 'capitalistic sympathies to Government', ('an attribution of partiality which I cannot entertain without promptly disavowing it') stating that he regarded the organisation of labour 'on sound economic lines' as being in the interests of labour, the government, and the city in general.¹⁶² The Governor's candid profession of impartiality might have been taken more seriously had the local state not shown such a ferocious anti-labour bias in dealing with the strikes of 1920. It deployed three battalions of regular troops to intimidate striking workers while providing employers, during the Petroleum workers' strike in Sewri, with military drivers to convey the fuel lorries to the mills.¹⁶³

This prompted a sharp rebuke from the Government of India which defined the use of the military as a 'wide departure' from the principle of police responsibility for dealing with industrial conflicts. The Lloyd Administration had 'lost sight' of the 'principles which should govern the relative responsibilities of the police and the military' during civil disturbances. Delhi also sought to remind the Bombay government that times had changed and '..that among the British soldiers of today there are many to whom military interference in trade disputes between employer and employed is particularly repugnant'.¹⁶⁴

Lloyd's reluctance to deploy the police was probably motivated by the signs of restlessness which had become apparent even within the ranks of the city's relatively privileged police force. In early 1920, a protest by constables at the perceived delay in the revision of their pay led to a 'small demonstration at CP Vincent's farewell parade' as well as 'regular morning and evening meetings at Charni Road Gardens in contravention of police standing orders'. The Commissioner of Police reported to the Bombay government that drastic action against the men would 'in all probability' have

¹⁶²ibid.

¹⁶³*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1922, p. 3; *GOB Judicial and Home Proceedings* Jan.-May 1922, p. 323.

¹⁶⁴Sec. GOI Army Dept. to Chief Sec. GOB, 21 Dec. 1921. *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1922, pp. 3-4.

been met 'by a general strike of the constabulary'.¹⁶⁵ This greatly alarmed the colonial state and led to a tighter regulation of the police through the passing of the Police Disaffection Act of 1922, aimed at securing its ranks from "subversion".¹⁶⁶

The spread of discontent to the police force is an indication of the near-universality of the urban social unrest during this era. Strikes could no longer, as in pre-war days, be spatially confined to individual establishments, departments, or even industries.¹⁶⁷ No longer were they essentially an issue for the private sector, enabling the local colonial state to maintain an appearance of disinterested impartiality. In the early 1920s, government-run institutions were rocked by an unprecedented wave of disputes which effectively exposed the glaring contradiction between the local state's public service self-image and its real private interests.

Local state institutions and associated quangos had been expanding since the war years, the official policy of 'retrenchment' notwithstanding. A major employer in the city, the Bombay government maintained enormous wage differentials between a higher level of select colonial executives and a lower mass level of poorly paid Indian employees. These conditions prevailed within the civil administration as well as in the postal, press telegraph, and police departments, and the Dockyard, Mint, and Port Trust establishments. A 'Secretary to Government', in the various departments, earned about Rs.3000 per month,¹⁶⁸ the 'Oriental Translator' took home Rs.1200, while government printers were paid a mere Rs.50;¹⁶⁹ in the police service, the top commissioner grades drew a monthly salary of around Rs.3000 while *jamadars* and constables at the bottom earned between Rs.30-80.¹⁷⁰

Although the local colonial state hastily attempted to revise the wages of its low paid workers in an attempt to forestall industrial action in early 1920, this often merely

¹⁶⁵GOB *Judicial Proceedings* Sept.-Dec. 1920, pp. 1589-91.

¹⁶⁶BC, 21 Oct. 1922.

¹⁶⁷Chandavarkar, *The origins of industrial capitalism..*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁸BC, 14 Nov. 1921.

¹⁶⁹GOB *Home & Judicial Proceedings* Jan.-June 1923, p. 203.

¹⁷⁰GOB *Judicial Proceedings* May-August 1919, p. 1041; Jan-June 1921, pp. 385-390.

had the opposite effect: in July, printers in government presses went on strike *following* an announcement of improved pay rates which they clearly regarded as unsatisfactory.¹⁷¹ Similarly, improved offers had to be made to the 4,175 dockers employed at the Royal Indian Marine Dockyard as well as the 3,500 Port Trust menials and *halalkores* before they resumed work.¹⁷²

Indeed, a major strike in virtually any industrial concern or large public establishment was now likely to have far-reaching effects. The textile mill strike of January 1919 quickly spread to the railway workshops, Mint, dockyard, and engineering works; when the mill workers struck again a year later, they were once more followed by railway, tramway, dock, engineering, and oil workers, as well as by municipal employees and even by tailors and cutters.¹⁷³ The strike by postmen and postal packers in September 1920 also drew telegraph peons into industrial action; they were soon joined by tramway and gas workers thus effectively paralysing the city's communications and public lighting systems.¹⁷⁴

The postmen's grievance was not only the low monthly wage of Rs.34-40 which the vast majority of them drew;¹⁷⁵ a government-appointed Retrenchment Committee had now recommended that their wages be brought down by ten percent, to the level of their fellow-workers in Calcutta and Madras. Union leaders pointed out that no account had been taken of the uniquely high cost of living in Bombay and contrasted the Postal Department's profitability and status as 'the biggest revenue-earning department of government' with its treatment of its own employees who had been turned into the 'pariahs of government service'.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, they compared the wage structure in the postal service in India with the situation prevailing in Britain and found that the lowest grade of postmen in England drew a minimum monthly pay of Rs.304, or

¹⁷¹GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings Nov. 1920, 281.

¹⁷²GOB Judicial Proceedings Jan.-April 1920, p. 377; GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings April 1920, 189.

¹⁷³Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing*., pp. 146-47.

¹⁷⁴BC, 9 Oct. 1920.

¹⁷⁵BC, 8 Oct. 1923.

¹⁷⁶BC, 3 Aug. 1921.

almost ten times the starting salary of a Bombay postman. In contrast, higher grades were paid less than in India.¹⁷⁷

For the first time, too, a sympathy strike was called by taxi-drivers in support of the postmen. This was warmly appreciated by Postal Union leader N. R. Kulkarni who described it as a 'pioneer strike', different to other labour disputes 'since it demands not higher wages but justice..¹⁷⁸ The long-drawn out postal strike, which lasted for the best part of a year, was said to have cost the government '..a sum that would have sufficed to meet the full demand of the men for ten years..¹⁷⁹ The Bombay Presidency Postmen's Union also became one of the first unions to put out a monthly bulletin, *The Postman*, in Marathi and English, whose initial circulation was estimated at around a thousand.¹⁸⁰

In these circumstances, the Bombay government had a vested interest in endeavouring to restrain wage increases in the private sector, for fear of their impact on its own workforce. Thus, while it periodically indulged in an "anti-millowner" discourse, in practice the local colonial state stood behind management's attempts to maintain the traditional low-wage structure of the cotton-textile industry regardless of workers' higher living costs and evolving patterns of consumption. In so doing, it revealed itself as an integral part of the dominant class forces hostile to demands for social and participatory entitlements: living wages, and the rights to strike and to belong to labour unions.

With wage levels determined purely by market conditions, pay increases in the textile industry tended to be conceded by millowners only under the severest pressure from workers, and then too as exceptional and temporary measures, liable to be overturned at the earliest opportunity. In turn, largely as a result of the escalating

¹⁷⁷Report on the First Bombay Provincial Postmen's Conference, October 1923; *BC*, 8 Oct. 1923.

¹⁷⁸*BC*, 2 Feb. 1921.

¹⁷⁹*BC*, 18 June 1921.

¹⁸⁰Annual Report on Indian and Anglo-Vernacular Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1922; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1923, p. 344.

inflation caused by the war, workers no longer regarded wage settlements as final, but as inextricably linked to both the spiralling cost of living and to the movement of wages in other industries.

In 1923, millowners found an opportunity of reversing the trend of pay concessions to their workers. Wage increases through bonus payments agreed upon during the 1919 strike continued in subsequent years, but in 1923 millowners invoked a fall in profits and stopped the bonus. This was now regarded as a customary wage entitlement and once again, a general strike in the textile industry broke out in January 1924. Labour activists led by Baptista set up a Strike Settlement Committee, but the millowners persuaded the Bombay government to set up a Committee of Inquiry into the dispute. Legally, the employers were on favourable grounds, having taken great care to establish, with the support of the colonial state, that the bonus was not part of the normal wage packet, but dependent on 'profits and goodwill'.¹⁸¹

The Committee of Inquiry was headed by Sir Norman MacLeod, Chief Justice at the Bombay High Court, and included the millowner Devdas Thackersey and the Director of the Labour Bureau, W. J Herridge, but no representative of the mill hands or member of a labour union. Significantly, the Committee's terms of reference excluded any consideration of workers' living costs. Its predictable conclusion, based primarily on figures presented by the Millowners Association, was that the workers had 'not established an enforceable claim to a bonus'.¹⁸²

The Committee failed to even investigate the claim that the bonus amounts had each year been deducted from the mills' gross profits as wages paid, which would, if proven, have legally undermined the millowners' central contention that the bonus was outside the sphere of the normal wage.¹⁸³ When, just over a year later, in August 1925, one hundred thousand mill hands once again downed tools and took to the streets in protest against a proposed eleven and a half percent wage cut, the Bombay

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 1924, pp. 23-27.

¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁸³ *BC*, 4 March 1924.

government refused to intervene, asserting that it was 'powerless' to order an inquiry.¹⁸⁴

The industrial unrest in Bombay was, however, being viewed with increasing alarm by the Government of India. The colonial state was indeed under pressure from the Secretary of State in London: membership of the League of Nations now made the protection of workers' rights of association and trade union membership obligatory on the British government under Article 427 of the Peace Treaty.¹⁸⁵ Delhi appeared perturbed that the Bombay government seemed too much of a participant in the city's social conflicts and not to be doing enough to either win over public opinion or educate employers 'with regard to the advantages of fair treatment of labour'.¹⁸⁶ Accordingly, the provincial government was compelled to set up a Labour Bureau in 1921. Its objective was to collect statistics that would '..measure the changes in the cost of living of industrial workers in Bombay city' by closely monitoring house rents as well as prices in shops patronized by workers.¹⁸⁷

The colonial state was particularly concerned by the novel impact of labour strikes on public opinion and was concurrently seeking to introduce legislative measures for the arbitration of industrial disputes. It pointed out that the increase in industrial unrest had 'led to the stimulation of public interest in labour questions'. This had come about largely as a result of the press's increased coverage of strikes which had 'been followed by a steady increase in the influence exerted by public opinion on the course of those disputes'.¹⁸⁸ The function of the Labour Bureau would be to provide "objective" facts

¹⁸⁴BC, 27 Nov. 1925. The textile workers also usually bore the costs of any dispute between the colonial state and the millowners. The latter, in this instance, attempted to justify the proposed cut by arguing that the excise duty imposed by the state on textile goods had increased their costs by eleven and a half percent. The wage cut was withdrawn when the GOI abolished the excise duty following a three month general strike by the workers. Chandavarkar, *The origins of industrial capitalism..*, p. 419.

¹⁸⁵GOB Judicial Proceedings Jan.-May 1922, p. 314.

¹⁸⁶GOI Home Pol.B Proceedings Nov. 1920, 281.

¹⁸⁷GOB Judicial Proceedings Jan.-June 1921, p. 715.

¹⁸⁸Secretary, GOI (Industry/Labour) to all Local Governments, 30 Aug. 1924. GOB Home and Judicial Proceedings Jan.-June 1925, p. 161.

and figures on the evolution of urban wages and costs of living which would provide a 'reliable' basis for public opinion judgements during industrial disputes.¹⁸⁹

The GOI's concern was based on the fact that throughout the strikes of the early 1920s, the most influential nationalist papers provided a coherent and critical interpretation of events, including their implications for both employers and the state. They warned employers that as a result of the upheavals of war, workers had come to realise their own power and it was now very much in capital's own interest to devise measures to improve the condition of labour. The press also called on the colonial state to enact legislation that would recognise basic social rights: a fair living wage, decent housing, and a reduction in working hours.¹⁹⁰

Moreover, workers' appropriation of public space during the frequent wave of strikes in this era enabled them to have a more direct impact on public opinion. These strikes were evolving their own public rituals which manifested the new impulses of active citizenship--workers wanted something changed in their lives and they were prepared to take their protests to the public, often in an eye-catching manner. The social geography of strike processions involved marching from the industrial localities around Parel in the north (the mill, railway workshops, and tram depot district) through the Indian town to Agents' offices in the Fort, before culminating in mass meetings on the Esplanade maidan in the south.

Moving from working-class to middle-class and affluent neighbourhoods in their journey from the north to the south, workers could appeal, both orally and through the wording of their banners, to the 'humanitarian instincts' of gathered crowds. The spiralling of the cost of living for all citizens from the war years onwards meant that they could generally count on a sympathetic response even in the more affluent southern parts of the city. During the strike of tramway workers in 1922, for instance, strikers marched from Parel to Colaba with banners in Marathi and English

¹⁸⁹Secretary, GOI (Industry) to all Local Governments, May 1921. *GOB Judicial Proceedings* Jan.-June 1921, p. 726.

¹⁹⁰*GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1920, p. 218.

proclaiming 'Down with the Tramway Bosses', 'United we stand Divided we fall', 'We want Justice nothing more nothing less'.¹⁹¹ These slogans were skilfully calculated to appeal to public opinion which already regarded the British-owned BEST Company (the 'Tramway Bosses') as the most objectionable private utility in the city.

This increasing prominence of labour issues in the public sphere both reflected and contributed to the growth of information on working-class conditions in Bombay, and on labour movements elsewhere. This in turn was part of an 'increasing public desire for information' that was aimed at rendering the workings of government more transparent and accountable.¹⁹² The press was of course pre-eminent in this process, not only through its reporting of strikes and other labour activities, and of their wider implications, but also by publicizing the work of official agencies such as the Labour Bureau and of welfare groups like the Social Service League.¹⁹³

The claims of labour were now not only championed by the *Chronicle* but by the bilingual (English-Gujarati) *Hindusthan*,¹⁹⁴ while the new Marathi weekly *Lokashahi* was specifically devoted to articulating the interests of the labour movement.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, journalists from these papers such as Chaman Lal and Venkat Ram doubled up as labour activists, issuing workers with a stream of leaflets, while Dange and his fellow socialist students combined propaganda work in the neighbourhoods of Girangaon with the organising of study-groups and the launch of new periodicals such

¹⁹¹*BC*, 19 Sept. 1922.

¹⁹²*Kaiser-i-Hind*, 13 Aug. 1921. BNNR no. 32, 1921.

¹⁹³This did not, of course, preclude criticism. The *Chronicle's* labour activist Chaman Lal questioned the Bureau's method of compiling the statistics, which, he asserted, were based on 'all-India average units' rather than on items actually consumed by Bombay workers. As a result, the Labour Bureau failed to convey a true picture of the real increase in workers' costs of living. The paper similarly criticized the Social Service League for failing to intervene in the daily 'wrongs inflicted on workers', for being too reliant on funds from industrialists, and for not being active enough in promoting the growth of trade unions. *BC*, 26 Oct. 1921 and 29 Aug. 1924.

¹⁹⁴Described by the Bombay government's "Oriental Translator" as 'promoting the dissemination of European socialistic literature'. Annual Report on Indian and Anglo-Vernacular Papers published in the Bombay Presidency for the year 1922; *GOB Confidential Proceedings* 1923, p. 236.

¹⁹⁵*GOI Home Pol. B Proceedings* 1924, 284.

as the English-weekly *Socialist*. In the latter, Congress was denounced as ‘..an organization of merchants and manufacturers’ which only perceived trade unions as ‘..a useful weapon to realise *swaraj* in terms of the bourgeoisie’.¹⁹⁶ Many unions themselves now began to shadow the Labour Bureau by collecting their own statistics and information that would enable them to ‘form a correct idea of the condition of workers’, indispensable to both promoting and protecting their rights.¹⁹⁷

Labour activists were thus able to draw on the growing availability of information on prices, wages, working conditions, and international movements, and invite workers to compare themselves to other workers in other industries; socialists were able to reinforce resentments and raise the level of class-consciousness by pointing to the disparities between profits and high salaries on the one hand, and wages on the other. These exchanges were conducted in the public space of the working-class neighbourhood: on street corners, and in tea-rooms and advocates’ offices.¹⁹⁸ Here newspapers and pamphlets were read out, industrial action planned, and the wording of leaflets and strike banners discussed.

The colonial state was thus faced with some new, and unheralded, threats to its hegemony. The explosion of industrial militancy, particularly in the public services directly run by government, served to highlight the unequal and unfair nature of the colonial wage structure; mediated by the press, it also reinforced nationalist public opinion by exposing another area of colonial malpractice; finally, labour militancy might also reach out towards the welcoming arms of the new communist ideology which both London and Delhi viewed as a real threat to the foundations of Empire.

Faced with this situation, the colonial state, already under pressure from London, resolved upon legislative intervention. The Factory Act of 1922 established a ten-hour working day and a maximum sixty-hour week in the textile industry.¹⁹⁹ Two years

¹⁹⁶IO, *Public and Judicial Dept. Files: L/P&J/12/1923/Chaman Lal; Kooiman, Bombay Communists..*, p.1229.

¹⁹⁷Burnett-Hurst, p. 104.

¹⁹⁸Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power..*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁹RCLI, vol. 1, p. 59.

later, the Indian Workmen's Compensation Act made employers liable for industrial accidents and injuries suffered by their workers.²⁰⁰ At the same time, the GOI proposed the introduction of legislation for the registration, and hence legalization, of trade unions.

Workers' combinations 'outside the civil law of the country', the GOI stated, was conducive neither to the long-term interests of the workers, nor to good industrial relations and national prosperity. The legalization of trade unions would encourage 'the steady betterment of the condition of labour by efforts from within'. Registration would enable workers to exercise control over the union's officers and funds while conferring upon it 'a recognized status and position in the eyes of industrialists and the public'.²⁰¹

The GOI's consultative document was not well received in industrial and official circles in Bombay city which was, after all, a bastion of old-fashioned free enterprise culture. Particularly after the strikes of 1919-20, employers, with the active connivance of the local colonial state, made vigorous attempts to repress the formation of trade unions at the workplace and generally refused to recognise those that came into existence.²⁰² Workers who joined and participated in the new organisations soon found themselves blacklisted and victimized. The BEST Company steadfastly denied recognition to the Tramway Union and subsequently dismissed most of the workers--about 1300--who had participated in the 1922 strike.²⁰³ Similarly, the BB & CI Railway Company proscribed its Employees' Association whose members were the first to be dismissed during the "retrenchment" of 1923.²⁰⁴

Moreover, the perceived collective threat of trade unions led employers to set up a combination of their own. The Bombay Engineering Employers' Federation was

²⁰⁰BC, 1 July 1924.

²⁰¹Sec. GOI Home Dept. to all provincial governments, 12 Sept. 1921; *GOB Home and Judicial Proceedings* Jan.-May 1922, pp. 253-54.

²⁰²Baptista, who was heavily involved in negotiations with employers on behalf of workers, observed that the vast majority of them were hostile to unions. BC, 18 June 1921.

²⁰³Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing*., pp.103-104.

²⁰⁴*Voice of India*, 8 Nov. 1923; BNNR no. 45, 1923.

established in 1921 'to combat the growing industrial unrest in Bombay during the immediate post-war years'. Its membership, limited to European personnel, significantly included representatives not only of large private companies--BEST, the Bombay Gas Company, the Standard and Burma Oil Companies--but of state run utilities: the Government Dockyard, the Telegraphs, and the GIP, BB & CI, and Port Trust Railways.²⁰⁵ The Federation thus constituted the reactionary organisational form of Anglo-Indian capitalism's resistance to labour modernism in the city, enabling employers and the local colonial state to exchange intelligence about workers and unions, to plan and co-ordinate their responses to strikes, and to anticipate and subvert industrial action before it threatened their interests.

Opposition from capitalist interests in the city to the proposed new legislation took the familiar discursive form of emphasizing Indian "difference". The 'problem' of the industrial working-class, the Bombay Chamber of Commerce asserted, could not be solved 'by merely copying the latest legislation from England'. Indian workers, with their essentially 'agrarian and migratory nature' had little in common with their English counterparts. The Millowners Association also strongly opposed the legislation which it viewed as 'premature'.

The Agent of the BB&CI Railway Company added that the growth of trade unions in England had resulted 'in each individual (worker) producing less than he could have done if he had not been bound by trade union laws'. The impact of such laws in India where 'for climatic and other reasons..the manual labouring class is not by nature a hard and steady worker' would be doubly disastrous. Colonial officials such as the Collector of Bombay and the Commissioner of Police were even more fervently anti-union, the former describing labour leaders as 'unscrupulous rogues', and the latter observing that it was legislation to protect workers 'from the machinations of professional agitators' that was in fact necessary.

²⁰⁵Burnett-Hurst, *Labour and Housing..*, p. 102.

In contrast, the *Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha*, the Social Service League, and the All-India Trade Union Congress welcomed the proposed legislation, the latter stating that it considered the GOI Declaration as signifying 'not merely protection but also promotion of trade unions'. This was particularly necessary, it pointed out, in the light of the pervasive anti-union dispositions of the city's large employers--the millowners and the railway and tramway companies. It also urged the colonial state to include the right of picketing. Peaceful picketing was an essential dimension of the right of association, enabling trade unions to effectively defend the interests of their members.

Moreover, unions should also be given the right to use their funds 'for any purpose whatsoever' including 'the advancement of political propaganda if it can further the workmen's interest'. The Social Service League also underlined that labour issues necessarily involved a political dimension: '..Politics cannot be altogether excluded from the labour movement as labour has to win rights and secure ameliorative measures through politics, and therefore it is necessary to recognise political activities confined to labour interests as among the legitimate objects of trade unions.'

The Bombay government, while not openly coming out against the proposed legislation, generally echoed the objections put forward by powerful class coalitions such as the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and the Engineering Employers Federation and reminded the GOI about the 'fundamental differences' between India and England. Although, by 1925, the local colonial state had come to accept that legislation was inevitable, it insisted that the new 'privilege' of trade union recognition by the State should not encompass any political entitlement. 'The obvious danger to be avoided', it warned the GOI, was that union funds 'which might easily reach a considerable figure' could be diverted to politically revolutionary purposes. '..The danger is so real that it justifies a curtailment of the powers of Trade Unions which would be otherwise unjustifiable.' 206

²⁰⁶GOB Home and Judicial Proceedings Jan.-May 1922, pp. 279-340; also Jan.-June 1925, pp. 105-136.

To official chagrin in Bombay city, the Trades Union Act of 1926 authorized peaceful picketing and conferred immunity on trade unions and their members from civil suits and criminal prosecutions. Since, under existing laws, union leaders could be, and indeed often were, prosecuted for exhorting workers to break their contractual agreements and go on strike, the new legal framework represented a decisive move from contract to status--the replacement of contractual free bargaining by a statutory declaration of rights. At the same time, however, unions had to give advance notice of strike action thus allowing both the state and employers ample time to counteract their plans. Within two years of the passing of the Trades Union Act, total union membership in the city had more than doubled, from around 87,500 to just under 200,000.²⁰⁷

Recognition of an albeit carefully circumscribed sphere of trade union activity within the workplace represented a social right extracted from a colonial state now subject to pressures on multiple fronts. *Since the Chamberlain Report of 1919, the Government of India had been under increasing pressure to take steps to improve the conditions of the Indian labour force.* However, in the urban-industrial world of 1920s Bombay, *this was largely an* exceptional and defensive measure. *It was* not accompanied by a burst of legislation indicative of a transformed perception by the state of any new social obligations, even though, by 1925, labour activists such as the barrister F.J Ginwalla, General Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress, was urging the Government of India to take a more comprehensive view of social rights, and accompany the Trade Union Bill with ‘..legislation on minimum wages, hours of labour, and leave rules..’²⁰⁹

There were now also calls for the introduction of unemployment benefit and old age pension schemes.²¹⁰ Although the Government of India signed the draft Convention

²⁰⁷RCLI, p.104.

²⁰⁹ibid., p. 194.

²¹⁰BC, 17 Aug. 1925.

on Unemployment at the International Labour Conference held in Washington in 1919, it failed to give it any real effect, merely inviting provincial governments to communicate their views on the Convention's recommendations.

Here, the GOI received a vexed and impatient response from the die-hard Bombay government couched yet again in the discourse of Indian "difference":

*The Government of Bombay realize that the Government of India attach the greatest importance to the necessity of ensuring that industrial organization in India should proceed on sound lines, but they have grave doubts whether this can be achieved by introducing legislation on all the most important industrial questions on Western lines without giving ample time to the local governments to formulate considered opinions and to decide whether the action that is proposed will be in every way suitable to Indian conditions.*²¹¹

'Ample time'? A curious objection in the light of the following exchanges, some years later, between the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, J. H. Whitley, and the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, R. W. Ewbank:

Whitley: 'You say: "As regards the application of the International Conventions relating to unemployment, in the short time at their disposal, the Government of Bombay are not in a position to formulate any conclusions". When was the matter of unemployment first brought to the notice of the GOB? Was it not in 1919?

Ewbank: I cannot say.

Whitley: The Washington Convention regarding the question of labour exchanges was in the year 1919. Was the GOB circularized, as other local governments were, in regard to this matter?

Ewbank: No doubt it was.

Whitley: Then you have had 10 solid years from 1919 to 1929, and yet you complain about the shortness of time.

²¹¹RCLI, vol.1, p. 146.

Ewbank: The Government would have naturally considered whether employment exchanges were necessary. Certainly during the periods of 1919, 1921, 1922, it was obvious that there was no necessity for employment exchanges.

Whitley: But after that you had 7 solid years to consider this problem. Has any attempt been made by the Bombay Government to deal with the problem since the boom period came to an end?

Ewbank: Government has never been satisfied that there is a problem.

Whitley: Your position is that the Government is not satisfied that there is a problem because it never made an enquiry into the matter?

Ewbank: We have made no statistical enquiry.

Whitley: Therefore you are not in a position to say whether there is a problem or not?

Ewbank: I do not think that follows at all.²¹²

A somewhat more honest appraisal of the local colonial state's steadfast reluctance to engage with any proposed measure of social legislation can be found in the Bombay government's response to another GOI request: this time in relation to the draft Convention on compulsory sickness insurance schemes adopted by the International Labour Conference held in Geneva in 1927. It felt '..constrained to point out that the extra expenditure which will inevitably be occasioned by any legislation which involves the starting of sickness insurance schemes will fall entirely on local Governments.'²¹³

Moreover, the potential role of unions as a democratizing force in urban society was seriously undermined when the Bombay government accorded them official representation as an 'interest group' within the far from representative Municipal Corporation in 1928.²¹⁴ Thus, while franchise restrictions continued to deny workers the right to choose political representatives, and unions could not engage in 'political' activities, registered trade union leaders were granted a fast track access to political influence within an unchanged authoritarian structure of local government. This

²¹²ibid., p. 196.

²¹³ibid., p. 147.

²¹⁴Jhangiani (ed.), *Bombay Municipal Corporation...*, p. 20.

represented a classic example of colonial cooption: separated from the rank-and-file membership, the four nominated trade unionists were now subject to the rules of colonial patronage; they were encouraged to see themselves as “natural” (as opposed to democratically elected) leaders of another “section” of urban society, chosen to collaborate with the colonial regime.

More fundamentally, the local state’s authoritarianism and general unwillingness to support the validation of expanded citizenship rights, was a function of its own class location in urban society. Traditionally, it had used its unique resources of power, wealth, and prestige to structure the dominance of capital over civil society. Integral to this hegemony was a system of unscrutinized accommodations between the colonial regime and the dominant class factions, largely at the expense of the majority of urban citizens. This process had shaped a characteristically archaic and regressive capitalism, hostile to the development of civic rights, and thus posing a formidable obstacle to sustainable urban renewal. In this era, however, the escalating demands for a range of democratizing rights began to pose challenges that could not ultimately be resolved within the limitations of the colonial model of citizenship.

Conclusion: Urban themes

This is primarily a thesis on urban history, a rather neglected dimension of the study of Indian history. It is also a social history of the colonial city. The spatial framework of the urban has enabled the exploration of a range of related social processes within the functioning totality that is Bombay city during this era. The study has been organised around a number of recurrent themes related to the major preoccupation with the impact of modernity.

Modernity, I have suggested, was the inescapable destiny of the city of Bombay, potentially offering a diverse range of possibilities and experiences. In practice however, the material culture of modernity in Bombay was largely determined by the social filters of colonial political power and indigeneous class dominance. This thesis has attempted to draw out the dialectical interplay between the repressive modernism of colonial power and its contesting antitheses: the invented anti-urban traditionalism of the Gandhian movement and the emergence of a *critical modernism* articulated around immediate demands for expanded citizenship rights. In contrast to Gandhi's attempts at rejecting the materialities of the urban, this critical modernism acted as a force to humanise the city. It strove to expand rights of public expression, of democratic participation, of collective bargaining, and imagined a new city. It used words to dislocate and disrupt the familiar meanings of the colonial order; it promoted ideologies and organisations to counter and contest the individualism of colonial capitalism; and it gave rise to a host of appropriations of "colonial" resources and commodities.

The dynamics of the contested colonial hegemony have also been investigated. The identification of the colonial mode of production of the city's *spatial structure* has been of fundamental importance. It has demonstrated how the power to command and produce urban space is of primary significance in understanding the overall development of the city. The production of space with the new possibilities of modern technologies for the purposes of colonial prestige on the one hand, and of unregulated commercial and industrial capital accumulation on the other, led to a number of

cumulative anti-social consequences: the creation of a hierarchy of stratified social spaces; the growth of commercial and industrial structures at the expense of residential accommodation; and the construction of extremely poor quality housing for the city's labouring population.

The city's spatial structure was also intimately related to its *social structure*. The emphasis on civil property and trading rights at the expense of political rights shaped the process of indigeneous class formation in the city. It led to the emergence of the dominant and collaborationist class factions of merchants, landlords, and industrialists who were able to accumulate considerable property, income, and influence. Both economically and politically, these groups dominated the unenfranchised lower classes of industrial and service workers, small traders, and clerks. In between, the influential intelligentsia, created as a class of interpreters, but denied a voice in civic affairs until the mid-1920s, remained a critical and oppositional force.

The authoritarian nature of colonial rule combined with the *economics of laissez-faire* to ensure that power and wealth determined not only the right of urban land acquisition but also the unregulated freedom of use of landed property. The individualism of both colonial and private capitalist interests precluded a conception of the city as an integrated social space requiring various forms of public intervention to ensure a sustainable and socially responsible use of land. Urban land, moreover, was a particularly scarce resource for wealth generation, and it increasingly tended to exacerbate competitive ventures within the dominant class factions; indeed, as a commodity, it lent itself admirably to speculative transactions. These processes ensured that urban development and renewal schemes, governed by the needs and preferences of this elite minority, remained piecemeal and incoherent. At the same time, the consequent rapid escalation in land values unleashed a chain reaction in terms of higher rents and building costs, to the great detriment of the urban poor.

Class was thus shown to be a pervasive social cause, the blighted spatial environment in which the majority of citizens were compelled to live and work being largely the result of competing elites' attempts to realise the full market capacities of

their landed property. At the same time, the extreme inequality of income between the small minority of high-salaried executives and the large mass of employees in both private and public sectors, ensured the latter's poor access to basic material resources; inadequate wages, consistently failing to keep up with rising prices, ensured the persistence of high levels of social deprivation amongst the working and lower middle classes. Indeed, the low-wage structure of the urban economy and the social maldistribution of the enormous wealth accumulated by commercial and industrial enterprise, shaped an undynamic, "backward" capitalism which precluded any kind of sustainable urban development. In the absence of attempts at social redistribution through, for instance, state subsidies, low incomes effectively ruled out any prospect of mass suburbanization and the decongestion of the city; indirectly, they also contributed to the gradual deterioration of the physical urban environment.

The *revolutionary impact of the First World War* on the city has also emerged from this study and revealed, at the same time, Bombay's importance in the global network of Empire. The War aggravated material scarcities, widened disparities between rich and poor, worsened conditions of urban life, and intensified colonial repression; but dialectically, at the same time, the Empire's need in the crisis of war enabled the realisation of the full potential of the technological revolution in communications, bringing to the city a new discourse of civic rights that was simultaneously subverting the old social order within Europe. The democratic widening of the franchise, the importance for labour of trade union organisation, the regeneration of cities through planning, were some of the ideas particularly suited to a favourable reception in Bombay. The newspaper became the essential vehicle for the adaptation, vernacularization, and diffusion of the new ideas. This is why it was immediately perceived as a grave threat to the limited discursive domains of colonial hegemony. As a result, unprecedented surveillance and repression was visited upon the leading civic paper, the *Bombay Chronicle*, and its activist editor, Horniman.

In this acceleration of the urban rhythm of communications, we have also observed the *primary role of a critical, bilingual intelligentsia*, a product of the specific colonial

social structure of the city. Active in a range of civic arenas which linked the worlds of the press, platform political oratory, social work, and labour activism, these journalists, barristers, and social reformers were engaged in a creative process of translating and vernacularizing the new ideas of citizenship. This process has also shed new light on the relationship between written and oral communication in the colonial city. Contrary to assumptions about the written and the oral inhabiting distinct and separate discursive domains, the rapid circulation of printed texts, in a period of acute social crisis and political contestation, actually led to an increase in oral transmissions of information. Largely disseminated by the same group of bilingual activists, these exchanges were viewed with considerable alarm by the authorities who vainly attempted to control the production and circulation of printed forms. Also underlined here is the fact that the value and usefulness of a language is determined less by any immanent characteristic (in terms of being eg 'English' or 'Indian') than by its perceived appropriateness and meaningfulness to particular social and political contexts.

This study has also highlighted the impact of these expanded communications on the *evolution of urban public opinion*. The city's domination by an authoritarian local colonial state presiding over a laissez-faire economic regime was also an expression of the limitations and weakness of the public sphere of civil society. These hegemonies were now challenged by an increasingly critical public opinion shaped by the dynamic discourses produced by the growth of newspapers and political organisations, and by the emergence of trade unions and welfare associations. What mattered here was not so much the individual "ideology" of these new forums, but the intensified public debates and cumulative generation of information which their interventions provoked. It was the growth of this public dialogue that was now setting a new civic agenda and creating severe pressure on the colonial state for the expansion of civil and democratic rights as well as for interventionist social legislation.

In assessing colonial practices and interventions, the *importance of distinguishing between the central and local instances of colonial power* has also emerged. The government of Bombay's historic power to shape the physical form of the city, its

financial powers and ownership of urban land, its close political involvement with the dominant class factions, and its responsibility for day-to-day law and order, made it a far more influential structure of power than the rather distant Government of India. Indeed, its direct class location in urban society generally inclined it towards a more repressive orientation vis-a-vis civil society than favoured by the central state. The local state's sense of its particular interests also determined the limited scope of municipal government, while ensuring a general policy of parsimony in public spending and social non-intervention in capital-labour relations. And crucially, it offered an obstinate resistance to demands for modern citizenship rights compared to the more manipulative approach of a central state now subject to global pressures. The impact of the First World War significantly altered the inter-colonial balance of power in favour of the government of India and intensified the contradictions of the local colonial regime.

Finally, in revisiting Gandhi's strategies of public mobilization in the city, this thesis has also identified the *problematic anti-urbanism of Gandhian politics*. Gandhian techniques, based essentially on an appeal to renounce the material realms of urban life, might have a conjunctural mobilizing effect on middle merchants, but stood little chance ultimately of persuading the urban commercial class to sacrifice its material interests for political ends. The logic of the Gandhian world-view, moreover, excluded the urban working classes, unlikely to respond favourably to "material renunciation", and increasingly attracted to the confrontational strategies and possibilities of modern mass agitation. The city was ultimately a far more persuasive harbinger of modernity than Gandhi was of tradition. In contrast to the temporary and class-specific appeal of the Mahatma in the Bombay of the early 1920s, the modern pleasures of cinema, cricket, clothes, and tea were becoming a permanent and universal feature of urban life.

Fast-forwarding from the mid-1920s, the municipal franchise would be widened by the reduction of the rental qualification to five rupees in 1936, but universal adult franchise for all elections would have to wait until independence in 1947. Meanwhile, not only would social rights fail to make much headway, but the Congress Provincial Government, in power in Bombay between 1937 and 1939, would outdo the colonial

state in its repression of organised labour. Railway electrification eventually led to a more substantial middle-class movement towards the suburbs, but with the city continuing to attract a large labouring population, this would have no effect on inner city congestion. Moreover, the inequities of capitalist urban processes identified in this thesis would perpetuate themselves and continue to thwart the civic rights of housing, water-supply, and sanitation for the majority of the urban population.

The perspectives of critical modernism, too, would evolve beyond this era and, from their urban base, achieve an influential presence in Indian society. These perspectives would not deny the vast reservoir of Indian tradition, nor would they always systematically seek to question, confront, or transform all aspects of the living past. But they would consistently employ new techniques of expression and modes of organisation to raise the possibilities of a more socially just and humane society. Local, grassroots forums would strive for expanded civic and human rights and for greater material well-being for the poorer classes; films, novels, and plays would reflect as much on iniquitous traditions as on repressive modernities; architecture, sculpture, painting, and photography would seek to re-present deep cultural structures in the light of modern conditions and sensibilities.

Horniman's investigative and critical journalism would be developed and renovated; its ability to highlight and expose the repressive practices of both local and central States would become even more necessary in post-colonial India. Communist ideology would provide Bombay workers with new articulations of their condition, new possibilities of mass action, and a new vision of society; the social films of the 1930s would address both mythological themes and modern issues; simultaneously, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) would elaborate a new socialist aesthetics that would exercise considerable influence on the development of the performing and expressive arts; Marathi literature, increasingly devoted to fiction and drama would, similarly, use social realism to explore the condition of women in contemporary society. Decades later, long after independence, the modernist architecture of Charles Correa would finally address the issue of low-cost housing for

the urban poor, while grassroots development projects, using methods of direct democracy, would reveal fresh insights on poverty alleviation and environmental regeneration.

Abbreviations

BB & CI	Bombay Baroda & Central India Railway
BC	Bombay Chronicle
BEST	Bombay Electric Supply and Tramways Company
BG	Bombay Gazette
BITR	Bombay Improvement Trust Report
BMCR	Annual Report of the Bombay Municipal Commissioner
BNNR	Bombay Native Newspaper Reports
CI	Census of India
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
DCI	Weekly Reports of the Director, Criminal Investigations Department
EPW	Economic and Political Weekly
FR	Fortnightly Reports
GIP	Great Indian Peninsula Railway
GOB	Government of Bombay
IO	India Office
MAS	Modern Asian Studies
RCLI	Royal Commission on Labour in India
TOI	Times of India
YI	Young India

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